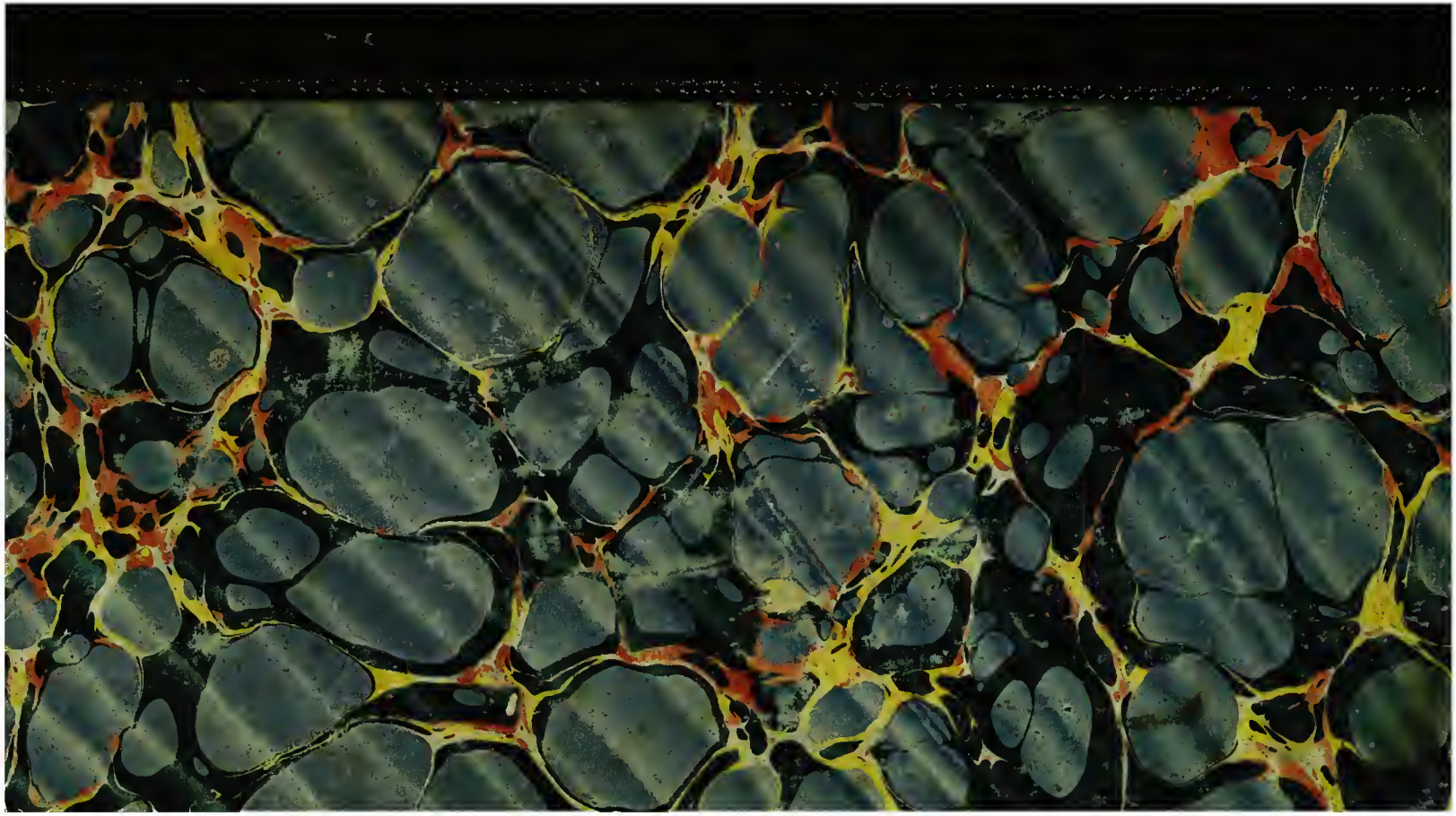

A

SERIES OF PLAYS:

IN WHICH

IT IS ATTEMPTED TO DELINEATE

THE

STRONGER PASSIONS OF THE MIND:

EACH PASSION

BEING THE

SUBJECT OF A TRAGEDY AND A COMEDY.

BY

JOANNA BAILLIE.

A NEW EDITION.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

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PATERNOSTER-ROW.

1821.

TO

MATTHEW BAILLIE, M. D.

AS AN

OFFERING OF GRATITUDE AND AFFECTION

FOR THE UNWEARIED ZEAL

AND BROTHERLY PARTIALITY

WHICH HAVE CHEERED AND SUPPORTED ME

IN THE COURSE OF THIS WORK,

I INSCRIBE THIS VOLUME.

TO THE READER.

After a considerable interval of time from the publishing of the first, I now offer to the Public a second volume of the "Series of Plays;" and, with it, my very grateful thanks for that indulgence and cheering approbation which has encouraged me to proceed thus far in my work. I have to thank it for that kind of reception which is best calculated to make a work go on well — praise mixed with a considerable portion of censure. I have to thank it, indeed, for that kind of reception which I solicited; conscious that it was the best, in regard to my real interest, which I could receive; as well as the very best, in regard to my merits, which I could possibly presume to expect. If with this great advantage, beyond what I enjoyed when I wrote the first part of this work, I have fallen short in the second volume, of what might have been reasonably expected from me, I have only to say for myself, that I have done my best, and that my abilities are in fault, and not my industry. The

time, indeed, that has elapsed since the publication of the first volume, will, I trust, be considered as a proof that the portion of public approbation with which I have been favoured, has not rendered me presumptuous.

I know there are causes why the second part of a work should be more severely dealt with than that which has preceded it: but after what I have experienced, it would be ungrateful in me not to suppose that the generality of readers will take up this volume with a disposition to be pleased: and that they will also, in favour of one who has no great pretensions to learning or improvements, be inclined to extend the term of good-natured indulgence a little beyond its ordinary limits.

The first play in this volume is a comedy on Hatred, as a companion to the tragedy I have already published upon the same subject. Of this I shall say little. I have endeavoured in it to show this passion in a different situation, and fostered by a different species of provocation, from that which was exhibited in De Monfort, and existing in a character of much less delicacy and reserve. I am aware, that it falls greatly short of that degree of comic effect which the subject is calculated to produce, and which a writer of truer comic talents would have given it.

The subject of the other three plays is Ambition. It is with regret that I have extended the serious part of it to an unusual length, but I found that within a smaller compass I could not give such a

view of the passion as I wished. Those passions which are of a permanent nature are the proper subjects of this work; such I mean as are capable of taking up their abode in the mind, and of gaining a strong ascendancy over it during a term of some length; I have, therefore, in all these plays, given myself greater scope in point of time than is usual with dramatic writers. But, compared with ambition, perhaps all other passions may be considered as of a transient nature. They are capable of being gratified; and, when they are gratified, they become extinct, or subside, and shade themselves off (if I may be allowed the expression) into other passions and affections. Ambition alone acquires strength from gratification, and after having gained one object, still sees another rise before it, to which it as eagerly pushes on; and the dominion which it usurps over the mind is capable of enduring from youth to extreme age. To give a full view, therefore, of this passion, it was necessary to show the subject of it in many different situations, and passing through a considerable course of events; had I attempted to do this within the ordinary limits of one play, that play must have been so entirely devoted to this single object, as to have been left bare of every other interest or attraction. These are my reasons for making so large a demand on the patience of my reader in favour of this passion; and if I am pardoned in this instance, there is little danger of my offending again in the same manner.

I am perfectly sensible, that from the length of these tragedies, and, perhaps, some other defects, they are not altogether adapted to the stage; but I would fain flatter myself, that either of the parts of Ethwald might, with very little trouble, be turned into an acting play, that would neither fatigue nor offend. I should, indeed, very much regret any essential defect in this work, that might render it unfit for being more generally useful and amusing.

The scene of these plays is laid in Britain, in the kingdom of Mercia, and the time towards the end of the Heptarchy. This was a period full of internal discord, usurpation, and change; the history of which is too perplexed, and too little connected with any very important or striking event in the affairs of men, to be familiarly known, not merely to common readers, but even to the more learned in history. I have, therefore, thought, that I might here, without offence, fix my story; here give it a "habitation and a name," and model it to my own fancy, as might best suit my design.—In so doing, I run no risk of disturbing or deranging the recollection of any important truth, or of any thing that deserves to be remembered. However, though I have not adhered to history, the incidents and events of the plays will be found, I hope, consistent with the character of the times; with which I have also endeavoured to make the representation I have given of manners, opinions, and persons, uniformly correspond. I have, indeed, given a very dark picture of the religion and

the clergy of those days; but it is a true one: and I believe it will be perceived throughout the whole, that it is drawn by one, who would have touched it with a lighter hand, had the spirit and the precepts of Christianity, and above all, the superlatively beautiful character of its divine Founder, been more indifferent to her.

To give a view of Ambition, as it is generally found in the ordinary intercourse of life, excited by vanity rather than the love of power, and displayed in a character which is not, like that of Ethwald, supported by the consciousness of abilities adequate to its designs, has been my object in the comedy that accompanies the foregoing tragedies. As a long period of time, and a long chain of events, did not appear necessary to this purpose, I have confined myself to the usual limits of a dramatic work. There is nothing, I believe, either in the story or the characters of the piece, that call upon me to say any thing in regard to them. Such as it is, I leave it, with its companions, in the hands of my reader, with some degree of confidence struggling against many fears: and I am willing to hope, that, if in the course of this volume I have given, in general, a true representation of human nature, under such circumstances as interest our hearts and excite our curiosity, many sins will be forgiven me; especially as, I trust, they are not sins of carelessness or presumption.

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THE ELECTION:

A COMEDY,

IN FIVE ACTS.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

MEN:

BALTIMORE, *a country gentleman, and the head of an old family fallen into decay.*

FREEMAN, *a great clothier, who has acquired by his own industry a very large fortune.*

TRUEBRIDGE, *the friend of* Baltimore.

CHARLES, *an idle young man, cousin to* Baltimore, *and brought up in his house.*

JENKISON, SERVET, } *Two Attorneys.*

BESCATTI, *an Italian master.*

DAVID, PETER, } *Servants to* Baltimore.

Voters, Mob, Boys, Jailers, &c. &c.

WOMEN:

Mrs. BALTIMORE.

Mrs. FREEMAN.

CHARLOTTE, *daughter to* Freeman.

GOVERNESS.

MARGERY, *an old servant of the* Baltimore *family.*

Servants, Voters' Wives, Mob, &c.

THE ELECTION.

ACT I.

SCENE I. *The open market-place of a small country town, a crowd of men, women, and children, seen on the back ground;* MARGERY *and* Countryman, *surrounded with several others, are discovered talking on the front of the stage.*

MARGERY.

PATRON! pot-man an' you will. As long as he holds the brown jug to their heads, they'll run after him an' he were the devil. Oh! that I should live to see the heir of the ancient family of Baltimore set aside in his own borough by a nasty, paltry, nobody-knows-who of an upstart! What right has he, forsooth! to set himself up for to oppose a noble gentleman? I remember his own aunt very well; a poor industrious pains-taking woman, with scarcely a pair of shoes to her feet.

Countryman. Well, well, and what does that signify, Goody? He has covered more bare feet with new shoes since he came among us, than all the noble families in the country, let his aunt wear

what shoes she would: ay and his bounty has filled more empty bellies too, though his granum might dine on a turnip, for aught I know or care about the matter.

Mar. Don't tell me about his riches, and his bounty, and what not: will all that ever make him any thing else than the son of John Freeman the weaver? I wonder to hear you talk such nonsense, Arthur Wilkins; you that can read books and understand reason : such a fellow as that is not good enough to stand cap in hand before Mr. Baltimore.

(*The rabble come forward, huzzaing, and making a great noise, and take different sides of the stage.*)

Croud on F. side. Huzza! Huzza! Freeman for ever!

Mar. Yes, yes, to be sure: Freeman for ever: fat Sam the butcher for ever! black Dick the tinker for ever! any body is good enough for you, filthy rapscallions!

1*st Mob on F. side.* Ay, scold away, old Margery! Freeman for ever! say I. Down with your proud, pennyless gentry! Freeman for ever!

Mar. Down with your rich would-be-gentry upstarts! Baltimore for ever! (*to mob on her side*) Why don't you call out, oafs?

(*The mob on her side call out* Baltimore, *and the mob on the other,* Freeman; *but the F. side gets the better.*)

What, do you give it up so? you poor, spiritless

nincumpoops! I would roar till I bursted first, before I would give it up so to such a low-liv'd, beggarly rabble.

2d Mob on F. side. They lack beef and porter, Margery. That makes fellows loud and hearty, I trow. Coats of arms and old pictures wont fill a body's stomach. Come over to Freeman-hall, and we'll shew you good cheer, woman. Freeman for ever!

Mar. Ha' done with your bawling, blackimoor! what care I for your good cheer? none of your porter nor your beef for me, truly!

2d Mob on F. side. No, Goody! mayhap, as you have been amongst the gentry all your life, you may prefer a cup of nice sage tea, or a little nice rue-water, or a leg of a roasted snipe, or a bit of a nice tripe dumplin.

Mar. Close your fool's mouth, oaf! or I'll cram a dumplin into it that you won't like the chewing of. Mr. Baltimore's father kept a table like a prince, when your poor beggarly candidate's father had scarcely a potatoe in his pot. But knaves like you were not admitted within his gates to see it, indeed. Better men than you, or your master either, were not good enough to take away his dirty trenchers; and the meanest creature about his house was as well dress'd, and in as good order, as if it had been the king's court, and every day in the year had been a Sunday.

2d Mob on F. side. So they were, Goody; I

remember it very well; the very sucking pigs ran about his yard with full bottom'd wigs on, and the grey goose waddled through the dirt with a fine flounced petticoat.

Mar. Hold your fool's tongue, do! no upstart parliament-men for me! Baltimore for ever!

Croud on B. side call out, Baltimore for ever!

1*st Mob on B. side.* Sour paste and tangled bobbins for weavers!

1*st Mob on F. side.* Empty purses and tatter'd lace for gentlemen!

Old woman on B side. We'll have no strange new-comers for our member: Baltimore for me!

Old woman on F. side. Good broth is better than good blood, say I: Freeman for me!

Little Boy on B. side. Weaver, weaver, flap, flap!
Grin o'er your shuttle, and rap, rap!
(*Acting the motion of a weaver.*)

Little Boy on F. side. Gentleman, gentleman, proud of a word!
Stand on your tip-toes, and bow to my lord!
(*Acting a gentleman.*)

Mar. Go, you little devil's imp! who teaches you to blaspheme your betters? (*She gives the boy a box on the ear: the mob on the other side take his part: a great uproar and confusion, and exeunt both sides fighting.*)

SCENE II.

A walk leading through a grove to BALTIMORE'S *house, and close by it. Enter Mrs.* BALTIMORE, *as if just alighted from her carriage, followed by her* Maid *and* PETER, *carrying a box and portfolio, and other things.*

Mrs. Balt. But what does all this distant noise and huzzaing mean? the whole town is in commotion.

Pet. It is nothing, as I know of, Ma'am, but my Master and Mr. Freeman's voters fighting with one another at the alehouse doors, to shew their goodwill to the candidates, as all true hearty fellows do at an election.

Mrs. B. Yes, our member is dead suddenly; I had forgot. But who are the candidates?

Pet. My master, Madam, and Mr. Freeman.

Mrs. B. Gentlemen supported by them, you mean?

Pet. No Ma'am, I mean their own two selves, for their own two selves. But I beg pardon for naming such a man as Freeman on the same day with a gentleman like my Master.

Mrs. B. Mr. Freeman, if you please, Peter; and never let me hear you name him with disrespect in my presence. Carry those things into the house: (*to the maid*) and you too, Blond; I see Mr. Baltimore. (EXEUNT *Servants.*

Enter BALTIMORE.

Balt. My dear Isabella, you are welcome home: how are you after your journey?

Mrs. B. Perfectly well; and very glad, even after so short an absence, to find myself at home again. But what is going on here? I have heard strange news just now: Peter tells me you are a candidate for the Borough, and Mr. Freeman is your rival. It is some blunder of his own, I suppose?

Balt. No, it is not.

Mrs. B. (*stepping back in surprise, and holding up her hands.*) And are you actually throwing away the last stake of your ruin'd fortune on a contested election.

Balt. I will sell every acre of land in my possession, rather than see that man sit in parliament for the borough of Westown.

Mrs. B. And why should not he as well as another? The declining fortunes of your family have long made you give up every idea of the kind for yourself: of what consequence, then, can it possibly be to you? I know very well, my dear Baltimore, it is not a pleasant thing for the representative of an old family declined in fortune, to see a rich obscure stranger buy up all the land on every side, and set himself down like a petty prince in his neighbourhood. But if he had not done it, some other most likely would; and what should we have gain'd by the change?

Balt. O! any other than himself I could have suffer'd.

Mrs. B. You amaze me. He has some disagreeable follies I confess but he is friendly and

Balt. Yes, yes, he affects patronage and public spirit: he is ostentatious to an absurdity.

Mrs. B. Well then, don't disturb yourself about it. If he is so, people will only laugh at him.

Balt. O! hang them, but they wont laugh! I have seen the day, when, if a man made himself ridiculous, the world would laugh at him. But now, by heaven, every thing that is mean, disgusting, and absurd, pleases them but so much the better! If they would but laugh at him, I should be content.

Mrs. B. My dear Baltimore! curb this strange fancy that has taken such a strong hold of your mind, and be reasonable.

Balt. I can be reasonable enough. I can see as well as you do that it is nonsense to disturb myself about this man; and when he is absent I can resolve to endure him: but whenever I see him again, there is something in his full satisfied face; in the tones of his voice; ay, in the very gait and shape of his legs, that is insufferable to me.

Mrs. B. Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!

Balt. What makes you laugh, Madam?

Mrs. B. Indeed I have more cause to cry! yet I could not help laughing when you talk'd of his gait and his legs: for people, you must know, have taken it into their heads that there is a resemblance between you and him! I have, myself, in twilight, sometimes mistaken the one for the other.

Balt. It must have been in midnight, I think. People have taken it into their heads! blind idiots! I could kick my own shins if I thought they had the smallest resemblance to his.

Mrs. B. Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!

Balt. And this is matter of amusement for you, Ma'am? I abhor laughing.

Mrs. B. Pray, pray, forgive me! This is both ludicrous and distressing. I knew that you disliked this man from the first day he settled in your neighbourhood, and that, during two years' acquaintance, your aversion has been daily encreasing; but I had no idea of the extravagant height to which it has now arrived.

Balt. Would I had sold every foot of my lands, and settled in the lone wilds of America, ere this man came, to be the swoln possessor of my forefathers' lands; their last remaining son, now cramp'd and elbow'd round, in one small corner of their once wide and extensive domains! Oh! I shall never forget what I felt, when, with that familiar and disgusting affability, he first held out to me his damned palm, and hail'd me as a neighbour. (*striding up and down the stage.*) Ay, by my soul, he pretends to be affable!

Mrs. B. You feel those things too keenly.

Balt. A stock or a stone would feel it. He has opposed me in every contest, from the election of a member of parliament down to the chusing of a parish clerk; and yet, damn him! he will never give me a fair occasion of quarrelling with him, for

then I should be happier. (*striding up and down again.*) Hang it: it was not worth a pinch of snuff to me, whether the high road went on one side of my field or the other; but only that I saw he was resolved to oppose me in it, and I would have died rather than have yielded to him.

Mrs. B. Are you sure, Baltimore, that your own behaviour has not provoked him to that opposition?

Balt. (*striding up and down as he speaks.*) He has extended his insolent liberalities over the whole country round. The very bantlings lisp his name as they sit on their little stools in the sun.

Mrs. B. My dear friend!

Balt. He has built two new towers to his house; and it rears up its castled head amongst the woods, as if its master were the lord and chieftain of the whole surrounding country.

Mrs. B. And has this power to offend you?

Balt. No, no, let him pile up his house to the clouds, if he will! I can bear all this patiently: it is his indelicate and nauseous civility that drives me mad. He goggles and he smiles: he draws back his full watery lip like a toad. (*making a mouth of disgust.*) Then he spreads out his nail-bitten fingers as he speaks — hah!

Mrs. B. And what great harm does all this do you?

Balt. What harm! it makes my very flesh creep like the wrigglings of a horse-leech or a maggot. It is an abomination beyond all endurance!

Mrs. B. The strange fancies you take in regard to every thing this poor man does, are to me astonishing.

Balt. (*Stopping short, and looking fixedly on her.*) Are to you astonishing! I doubt it not: I was a fool to expect that a wife so many years younger than myself would have any sympathy with my feelings.

Mrs. B. Baltimore! you wrong me, unkindly. —But his daughter comes : she will overhear us.

Balt. What brings that affected fool here? She is always coming here. It is an excrescence from the toad's back: the sight of her is an offence to me.

(*Enter* Charlotte, *with an affected air of great delicacy.*)

Char. How do you do, my dear Mrs. Baltimore? I am quite charm'd to see you. (*curtseys affectedly to Balt.*)

Mrs. B. I thank you, my dear; you are early abroad this morning.

Char. Oh! I am almost kill'd with fatigue; but I saw your carriage at the gate, and I could not deny myself the pleasure of enquiring how you do. The heat overcomes one so much in this weather: it is enough to make one faint: it is really horrid. (*speaking in a faint, soft voice, and fanning herself affectedly.*)

Mrs. B. It does not affect me.

Char. No! O you are not so robust, I am sure.

(*Enter a little country girl, trailing a great piece of muslin after her.*)

Girl to Char. Here, Miss; here is a piece of your petticoat that you left on the bushes, as you scrambled over the hedge to look at the bird's nest yonder.

Char. (*in confusion.*) O la! the briars will catch hold of one so, as one goes along. Give it me, give it me (*takes the muslin, and crams it hastily into her pocket*). This weather makes one go by the side of ditches, and amongst bushes, and any where for a little shade.

Balt. Tadpoles love ditches in all weathers.

(EXIT.

Char. (*looking after him strangely for a moment or two, and then skipping lightly up to Mrs. B. and taking her kindly by the hand.*) Thank heaven he's gone! I stand more in awe of him, than my mother and my governess, and all the whole pack of masters that ever came about the house. If there was not a certain look about him now and then, that puts me in mind of my father, I should take a downright aversion to him. O! I beg pardon! I mean I should not like him very well, even tho' he is your husband. But was it not provoking in that little chit to follow me with those rags in her hand?

Mrs. B. I suppose we shall have a glove or a garter coming after you bye-and-bye.

Char. O they may bring what they please now! —Well, How d'ye do? how d'ye do? how d'ye do? (*taking Mrs. B. by the hand, and skipping round her joyfully.*)

Mrs. B. Very well, my good little Charlotte.

Char. I am delighted to see you return'd. Ah, don't you remember how good you were to me, when I was a little urchin at Mrs. Highman's school? and how I used to stand by your side when you dress'd, and count over the pins in your pincushion?

Mrs. B. I remember it very well.

Char. But how comes it that we meet so seldom? you never come to see us now, and I dare not come to you so often as I wish, for Mr. Baltimore looks at me so sternly. Let papa and him contend with one another as they please; what have we to do with their plaguy election? O if we were but together! we could work and talk to one another all day long, and it would be so pleasant!

Mrs. B. Indeed, my dear Charlotte, I wish I could have you frequently with me; but I hope you have many pleasant employments at home.

Char. Ah, but I have not tho'. I am tired to death of music, and drawing, and Italian, and German, and geography, and astronomy, and washes to make my hands white. (*shaking her head piteously.*) But what does it signify fretting? I know I must be an accomplish'd woman; I know it very well.

Mrs. B. (*smiling.*) Don't you like to be occupied?

Char. O yes: it is not that I am a lazy girl. If they would plague me no more with my masters, but give me some plain pocket-handkerchiefs to hem, I would sit upon the footstool all day, and sing like a linnet.

Mrs. B. My dear girl, and so there must be things in this mix'd world to keep even thy careless breast from being as blithe as a linnet. But you were going home: I'll walk a little way with you.

Char. I thank you (*looking off the stage*). Is not that Charles at a distance? I dare say, now, he has been a fishing, or looking after coveys of partridges, or loit'ring about the horse dealers. I hope he did not see me get over the hedge tho'.

Mrs. B. Alas, poor Charles! I wish he had more useful occupations. It is a sad thing for a young man to be hanging about idle.

Char. So my papa says: and, do you know, I believe he had it in his head to get some appointment for him when this election came in the way. Shall I put him in mind of it?

Mrs. B. No, no, my dear Charlotte, that must not be. Shall we walk?

Char. (*scampering off.*) Stop a little, pray. (EXIT.

Mrs. B. Where is she gone to now?

Char. (*returning with something in her lap.*) Only to fetch my two black kittens. I bought them from a boy, as I went along, to save them from drowning. I could not curtsey to Mr. Baltimore, you know, with kittens in my lap, so I dropp'd them slyly under the hedge as I enter'd; for this fellow with the white spot on his nose makes a noise like a little devil. (*They go arm in arm to the side of the stage to go out, when Mrs. B. looking behind her stops short.*)

Mrs. B. No, I must not walk farther with you

just now: I see Mr. Truebridge coming this way, and I wish to speak to him. Good morning, my dear Charlotte. (Exit Charlotte.

Enter Truebridge.

You are hurrying away very fast; I did not know you were here.

True. I have been in the library writing a letter, which I ought to have done before I left my own house. I am going from home for a few days, and I came to see Baltimore before I set out.

Mrs. B. You are always going from home. I am very sorry you are going at this time, when your presence here might have been so useful. You might have persuaded Baltimore, perhaps, to give up this foolish contest with so rich a competitor as Freeman.

True. No, it is better, perhaps, to let them fight it out. We should only have separated them, like two game-cocks, who are sure to be at it again, beak and spurs, with more fury than ever.

Re-enter Baltimore.

Balt to True. You have forgot your letter. A pleasant journey to you! (*gives him a letter.*)

True. Farewell for a few days! I hope to learn, on my return, that you have carried on this contest with temper and liberality, since you will engage in it.

Balt. Why, you know, Truebridge, I am compell'd to engage in it.

True. O certainly, and by very weighty reasons too! A man may injure in a hundred different ways and provoke no hostile return; but when added to

some petty offences, he varies his voice and gesture, wears his coat and doublet, nay, picks his very teeth in a manner that is irksome to us, what mortal is there, pagan or believer, that can refrain from setting himself in array against him?

Balt. Well, well! give yourself no trouble. I'll keep my temper; I'll do every thing calmly and reasonably.

True. Do so; I sha'n't return, probably, till the poll is closed. I have told you my reasons for taking no part in the business; and let the new member be who he will, I'm resolved to shake hands cordially with him. It won't do for one who has honours and pensions in view, to quarrel with great men. Good bye to you!—Madam, all success to your wishes. [EXIT.

Balt. Ask favours of such a creature as Freeman! He speaks it but in jest. Yet if I did not know him to be one of the most independent men in the world, I should be tempted to believe that he too had become sophisticated.

Mrs. B. Ah, do not torment yourself with suspicions! I am afraid it is a disposition that has been growing upon you of late.

Balt. No, madam; it is upon you this disposition has been growing. Whenever I am in the company of that—I will not name him—I have of late observed that your eyes are bent upon me perpetually. I hate to be look'd at when I am in that man's company. [EXEUNT.

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

ACT II.

SCENE I. *A room in* FREEMAN'S *house; a table with drawings, &c. scattered upon it, in one corner, and a writing-table near the front of the stage. Mrs.* FREEMAN *is discovered writing. Enter* CHARLOTTE *and her* Governess.

Mrs. FREEMAN, *(raising her head.)*

Come here, Miss Freeman: that gown sits with no grace in the world (*turning* Char. *round.*) No, it is not at all what I intended: I shall have it taken to pieces again. (*To the* Gov.) Was she in the stocks this morning?

Gov. Yes, Madam.

Mrs. F. From her manner of holding her head one would scarcely believe it. Go to your drawing, and finish it if you can before Mr. Bescatti comes. (Charlotte *sits down unwillingly to the drawing table; the* Governess *takes her work and sits by her; and Mrs.* Freeman *sits down again to write.*)

Enter Mr. BESCATTI.

Mrs. F. O Bescatti! you are just the very person I want. I have put a quotation from one of your Italian poets, expressive of the charms of friendship, into the letter I am writing to my dear, amiable Mrs. Syllabub; and as I know she shews all the letters she receives from her friends, I would

not have a fault in it for the world. Look at it, pray! Will it do? (*giving him the letter with an air of self-satisfaction.*)

Bes. (*shaking his head.*) No, Madam; I must be free to say, dat it won't do: de two first ords are wrong, and de two last ords are not right.

Mrs. F. (*colouring and bridling up.*) Why there are but four words of it altogether, Mr. Bescatti.

Bes. Yes, Madam; der you be very right; der you be under no mistake at all; der be just four ords in it, neider more nor less.

Mrs. F. Well, well, pray correct it for me! I suppose I was thinking of something else when I wrote it.

Bes. (*after correcting the letter.*) It is done, Madam. I hope de young lady will soon finish her drawing, dat I may have de honour to propose my little instruction.

Char. (*rising from the table.*) I can finish it to-morrow.

Mrs. F. Shew Mr. Bescatti your two last drawings (Char. *shews him her drawings.*) Every one from your country is fond of this delightful art. How do you like this piece?

Bes. It be very agreeable.

Gov. (*looking over his shoulder.*) O beautiful, charming! de most pretty of de world!

Mrs. F. There is such a fine glow in the colouring! so much spirit in the whole.

Bes. (*tardily.*) Yes.

Mrs. F. And so much boldness in the design.

Bes. (*tardily.*) Yes.

Mrs. F. And the cattle in that landscape are so spirited and so correct.

Bes. O dey be de very pretty sheep, indeed.

Mrs. F. Why, those are cows, Mr. Bescatti—those are cows.

Bes. O, Madam, I make no doubt dat in reality dey are the cows, alto in appearance dey are de sheep.

Mrs. F. (*shewing him another piece.*) He will understand this better. The subject is so prettily imagined! a boy with an apple in his hand: such pleasing simplicity! look at those lights and shades: her master himself says it is touched with the hand of an artist.

Bes. Yes, he be a very pretty fellow—and a very happy one too: he has got one apple in his hand, and anoder in his mout.

Mrs. F. Another in his mouth! why that is the round swelling of his cheek, Mr. Bescatti. But look at his head (*impatiently as he looks at the wrong one.*) No, no, this one.

Bes. O dat one—dat has one side of the face white and t'oder black!

Gov. O beautiful, excellent!—all dat der is of pretty—all dat der is of—of de most pretty!

Mrs. F. There is so much effect in it; so much force and distinctness.

Bes. Yes, der be good contrast; nobody will mistake de one side of de face for de oder.

Enter Servant.

Ser. Every thing in the next room is set out, Ma'am—Have you any orders?

Mrs. F. Don't trouble me about it: I'll look at it by and by, if I have nothing better to do. (*Exit Ser.*)—Miss Freeman, there is no time to lose; Bescatti and you must be busy, for I expect Mr. Tweedle this morning with a new song in his pocket.

Enter a Servant *hastily.*

Ser. All the voters are come, Ma'am, and my master says we must open the great room immediately. (*Opens folding-doors at the bottom of the stage, and discovers a large room with a long table set out, plentifully covered with cold meats, &c. &c.*

Mrs. F. What could possess the creatures to come so early? If I am to have the whole morning of it, I shall be dead before it is over. Heigh ho! here they are.

(*Enter a great number of voters with their wives and daughters, and* Freeman *shewing them in himself.*)

Free. (*with a very affable smiling countenance.*) Come in, ladies and gentlemen; come in, my very good neighbours; my wife will be proud to see you. (*presents them to Mrs.* Freeman, *who receives them with affected condescension; whilst* Charlotte *draws herself up by her mother's side, and curtseys to them in the same affected manner.*)—This is my very good friend Mr. Ginger, my dear; and this is worthy Mr. Fudge.—But where is your wife, Mr. Fudge?

we are near neighbours, you know, and I see no reason why your good woman and mine should not be better acquainted.

Mr. Fudge. She is standing close by you, Sir.

Free. O, I beg pardon, my dear Madam! I did not know you. (*to Mrs. Fudge.*)—My dear, this is Mrs. Fudge. (*presenting her to Mrs. F.*)—But my good Mr. Hassock, why have not you brought your pretty daughter with you?

Mr. Hassock. So I have, your honour; this be she. (*pointing to his daughter.*)

Free. She must give me her hand: I have a girl of my own too, you see; but she does not hold up her head so well as this young lady.

(*More people still coming in.*)

Ha! welcome, my good friends! welcome, my good neighbour Huskins, and you too, my good Mrs. Huskins!——Ha, Mr. Grub! you do me honour. How do the soap-works go on? you will soon be the richest man in the country, though you do spare me a morning now and then.

Mr. Grub. (*conceitedly.*) Aye, picking up a little in my poor way, just to keep the pot boiling. (*Going up to Mrs.* Freeman, *and wiping his face.*) Madam, I make bold, as the fashion goes on them there occasions. (*Gives her a salute with a good loud smack, whilst she shrinks back disconcerted, and* Bescatti *and the* Governess *shrug up their shoulders, and* Charlotte *skulks behind their backs frightened.*)

Mr. Fudge. (*spitting out his chew of tobacco and*

wiping his mouth.) As the fashion goes round, Madam —

Free. (*preventing him as he is going up to Mrs. F.*) No, no, my good neighbours: this is too much ceremony amongst friends. Let us go into the next room, and see if there is any thing to eat: I dare say there is some cold meat and cucumber for us. Let me have the honour, Mrs. Fudge. (*They all go into the next room and seat themselves round the table. Re-enter* Freeman *in a great bustle.*) More chairs and more covers, here! Thomas! Barnaby! Jenkins! (*the servants run up and down carrying things across the stage. Enter more people.*) Ha! welcome — welcome, my good friends! we were just looking for you. Go into the next room, and try if you can find any thing you like.

Voter. O, Sir, never fear but we shall find plenty of good victuals. [EXEUNT *into the next room.*

Manet Charlotte, *who comes forward.*

Char. La, how I should like to be a queen, and stand in my robes, and have all the people introduced to me! for then they would kiss no more than my hand, which I should hold out so. No, no; it should be so. (*stretching out her hand whilst* Charles Baltimore, *entering behind and overhearing her, takes and kisses it with a ludicrous bending of the knee.*)

Charles. And which should be kissed so?

Char. (*affectedly.*) You are always so silly, Mr. Charles Baltimore.

Charles. Are you holding court here for all those good folks? I thought there was no harm in look-

ing in upon you, though I do belong to the other side. (*peeping.*) Faith they are busy enough! mercy on us, what a clattering of trenchers! How do you like them?

Char. Oh! they are such savages; I'm sure if I had not put lavender on my pocket handkerchief, like Mama, I should have fainted away.

Charles. How can you talk of fainting with cheeks like two cabbage roses?

Char. Cabbage roses!

Charles. No, no — pest take it! — I mean the pretty, delicate damask rose.

Char. La, now you are flattering me!

Charles. I am not indeed, Charlotte! you have the prettiest — (*peeping at the other room and stopping short.*)

Char. (*eagerly.*) I have the prettiest what?

Charles. Is that a venison pasty they have got yonder!

Char. Poo, never mind! — I have the prettiest what?

Charles. Yes, I mean the most beautiful (*peeping again.*) By my faith and so it is a venison pasty, and a monstrous good smell it has!

[EXIT *hastily into the eating-room.*

Char. (*looking after him.*) What a nasty creature he is! he has no more sense than one of our pointers; he's always running after a good smell.

[EXIT.

SCENE II.

An open lane near a country town. Enter BALTIMORE, *who passes half way across the stage, and then stopping suddenly, shrinks back.*

Balt. Ha, it is him!—I'll turn and go another way. (*Turns hastily back again, and then stops short.*) No, no, he sha'n't see me avoiding him. I'll follow Truebridge's advice, and be civil to him.—(*Enter* Freeman *bowing with stiff civility.*) Good morning, Sir.

Free. And the same to you, Mr. Baltimore: how does your Lady do?

Balt. And your amiable lady, Mr. Freeman? she is a great scholar I hear.

Free. (*with his face brightened up.*) You are very good to say so; she does indeed know some few things pretty well; and though we are rivals for the present, why shouldn't we act liberally and speak handsomely of one another at the same time? Does Mrs. Baltimore like pine-apples as well as she used to do?

Balt. (*shrinking back.*) No, she dislikes them very much.

Free. Don't say so now! I believe you don't like me to send them to you, but if you would just send over for them yourself when she wants them, I have mountains of them at her service.

Balt. (*with a contemptuous smile.*) Shall I send a tumbrel for them to-morrow morning? (Free. *draws back piqued.*) But you are liberal to every

body, Mr. Freeman. I hope you and your friends have got over the fatigues of your morning feast? You were at it by times I hear.

Free. Yes, we have been busy in the eating and drinking way to be sure. I don't make speeches to them, and fill their heads with fine oratory; I give them from my plain stores what they like better, Mr. Baltimore.

Balt. And what you can spare better, Mr. Freeman. It is fortunate for both parties, that your stores are more applicable to the stomach than the head.

Free. It is better, at least, than flattering them up with advertisements in the newspapers, about their great dignity and antiquity, &c. I don't spend my money in feeding other people's vanity.

Balt. No, certainly, Sir; charity begins at home; and your own has, thanked God! a very good appetite.

Free. Pamper'd vanity is a better thing perhaps than starved pride. Good morning, Sir. [EXIT.

Balt. (*looking after him.*) See how consequentially he walks now, shaking his long coat skirts with that abominable swing! I should detest my own brother if he swung himself about after that manner. —Resemblance to him do they say! I could lock myself up in a cell, if I thought so, and belabour my own shoulders with a cat-o'nine tails.

(*Enter* PETER *with one of his idle companions, and starts back upon seeing* BALTIMORE.

Pet. (*aside to his Com.*) Pest take it! a body can never be a little comfortable in a sly way, but there

is always some cross luck happens to him. Yonder is my master, and he thinks I am half a dozen miles off with a letter that he gave me to 'Squire Houndly. Stand before me, man; perhaps he'll go past. (*skulking behind his Com.*)

Balt. (*seeing him.*) What, you careless rascal, are you here still, when I told you the letter was of consequence to me? To have this stick broke over your head is less than you deserve: where have you been, sirrah! (*Holding up his stick in a threatening manner.*)

Pet. O Lord! your honour, if you should beat me like stock fish I must e'en tell you the truth: for as I past by the cat and bagpipes a little while ago, I could not help just setting my face in at the door to see what they were all about; and there I found such a jolly company of 'Squire Freeman's voters, sitting round a bowl of punch, drinking his liquors and laughing at his grandeur, and making such a mockery of it, that I could not help staying to make a little merry with them myself.

Balt. (*lowering his stick.*) Art thou sure that they laugh'd at him?—In his own inn, and over his own liquor?

Pet. Ay, to be sure, your honour: what do they care for that? When he orders a hogshead of ale for them out of his own cellar, they call it a pack of lamb's wool from the wool chamber. Don't they, neighbour? (*tipping the wink to his Companion.*)

Com. To be sure they do.

Balt. Ha, ha, ha! ungrateful merry varlets! — Well, well! get thee along, and be more expeditious with my letters another time. (*to himself as he goes out.*) Ha, ha! a good name for his ale truly. [EXIT.

Pet. I wonder he did not give me a little money now for such a story as this. Howsomever, it has saved my head from being broke.

Com. And that, I think, is fully as much as it is worth. I wonder you an't ashamed to behave with so little respect to a gentleman and your own master.

Pet. Fiddle faddle with all that! do you think one gets on the blind side of a man to treat him with respect? When I first came to live with Mr. Baltimore, I must say I was woundily afraid of his honour, but I know how to manage him now well enough.

Com. I think thou dost, indeed. Who would have thought it, that had seen what a bumpkin he took thee from the plough's tail, but a twelvemonth ago, because he could not afford to hire any more fine trained servants to wait upon him?

Pet. Nay, I wa'n't such a simpleton as you took me for neither. I was once before that very intimate, in my fashion, with an old 'Squire of the North Country, who was in love with his grand-daughter's dairy-maid. I warrant you I know well enough how to deal with any body that has got any of them strange fancies working within them, for as great a bumpkin as you may take me to be; and if you don't see me, ere long time goes by, make a good

penny of it too, I'll give you leave to call me a noodle. Come away to the Blue-Posts again, and have another glass, man. [EXEUNT.

SCENE III.

FREEMAN'S *library fitted up expensively with fine showy books and book-cases, &c. &c. Enter* FREEMAN *and Mrs.* FREEMAN, *speaking as they enter.*

Free. They sh'a'nt come again, then, since it displeases you; but they all went away in such good humour, it did my heart good to see them.

Mrs. F. Oh the Goths and the Huns! I believe the smell of their nauseous tobacco will never leave my nostrils. You don't know what I have suffered to oblige you. To any body of delicacy and refinement, it was shocking. I shall be nervous and languid for a month. But I don't complain. You know I do every thing cheerfully that can promote your interest. Oh! I am quite overcome. (*sits down languidly.*)

Free. Indeed, my dear, I know you never complain, and I am sorry I have imposed such a task upon your goodness. But the adversary gains ground upon us, and if I do not exert myself, the ancient interest of the Baltimores — the old prejudice of family, may still carry the day.

Mrs. F. (*starting up eagerly, and throwing aside her assumed languor.*) That it sha'nt do if gold and activity can prevent it! Old prejudice of family! Who has a better right than yourself to serve for the borough of Westown!

Free. So you say, my dear; and you are generally in the right. But I don't know: I don't feel as if I did altogether right in opposing Mr. Baltimore, in his own person, in the very spot where his family has so long presided. If he did not provoke me —

Mrs. F. What, have you not got over these scruples yet? Has not all the rancorous opposition you have met with from him wound you up to a higher pitch than this, Mr. Freeman? It has carried you thro' with many petty struggles against his proud will already, and would you let him get the better of you now?

Free. (*thoughtfully.*) I could have wished to have lived in peace with him.

Mrs. F. Yes, if he would have suffered you.

Free. Ay, indeed, if he would have suffered me. (*musing for some time.*) Well, it is very extraordinary this dislike which he seems to have taken to me; it is inexplicable! I came into his neighbourhood with the strongest desire to be upon good terms with, nay to be upon the most friendly and familiar footing with him; yet he very soon opposed me in every thing, (*walking up and down, and then stopping short.*) I asked him to dine with me almost every day, just as one would ask their oldest and most intimate acquaintance; and he knew very well I expected no entertainments in return, which would have been a foolish expence in his situation, for I took care in the handsomest manner to let him understand as much.

Mrs. F. Well, well, never trouble your head about that now, but think how you may be revenged upon him.

Free. Tho' his fortune was reduced, and I in possession of almost all the estates of the Baltimores, of more land, indeed, than they ever possessed, I was always at pains to assure him that I respected him as much as the richest man in the county; and yet, I cannot understand it, the more friendly and familiar I was with him, the more visibly his aversion to me increased. It is past all comprehension!

Mrs. F. Don't trouble yourself about that now.

Free. I'm sure I was ready upon every occasion to offer him my very best advice, and, after the large fortune I have acquired, I may be well supposed to be no novice in many things.

Mrs. F. O, he has no sense of obligations.

Free. Ay, and knowing how narrow his income is in respect to the style of living he has been accustomed to; when company came upon him unexpectedly, have I not sent and offered him every thing in my house, even to the best wines in my cellars, which he has pettishly and absurdly refused?

Mrs. F. O, he has no gratitude in him!

Free. If I had been distant, and stood upon the reserve with him, there might have been some cause. Well, it is altogether inexplicable!

Mrs. F. I'm sure it is not worth while to think so much about it.

Free. Ah, but I can't help thinking! Have I not made the ground round his house, as well as my own, look like a well-weeded garden? I have cut down the old gloomy trees; and where he used to see nothing from his windows but a parcel of old knotted oaks shaking themselves in the wind, he now looks upon two hundred rood of the best hot-walls in the North of England, besides two new summer-houses and a green-house.

Mrs. F. O, he has no taste!

Free. The stream which I found running thro' the woods, as shaggy and as wild as if it had been in a desert island, and the foot of man never marked upon its banks, I have straightened, and levelled, and dressed, till the sides of it are as nice as a bowling-green.

Mrs. F. He has no more taste than a savage, that's certain. However, you must allow that he wants some advantages which you possess: his wife is a woman of no refinement.

Free. I don't know what you mean by refinement: She don't sing Italian and play upon the harp, I believe; but she is a very civil, obliging, good, reasonable woman.

Mrs. F. (*contemptuously.*) Yes, she is a very civil, obliging, good, reasonable woman. I wonder how some mothers can neglect the education of their children so! If she had been my daughter, I should have made a very different thing of her, indeed.

Free. I doubt nothing, my dear, of your good instructions and example. But here comes Jenkinson.

Enter JENKINSON.

How now, Jenkinson? things go on prosperously I hope.

Jen. Sir, I am concerned — or, indeed, sorry, — that is to say, I wish I could have the satisfaction to say that they do.

Free. What say you? sorry and satisfied? You are a smooth spoken man, Mr. Jenkinson; but tell me the worst at once. I thought I had been pretty sure of it as the poll stood this morning.

Jen. It would have given me great pleasure, Sir, to have confirmed that opinion; but unfortunately for you, and unpleasantly for myself—

Free. Tut, tut, speak faster, man! What is it?

Jen. An old gentlemen from Ensford, who formerly received favours from Mrs. Baltimore's father, has come many a mile across the country, out of pure good will, to vote for him, with ten or twelve distant voters at his heels; and this, I am free to confess, is a thing that was never taken into our calculation.

Free. That was very wrong tho': we should have taken everything into our calculation. Shall I lose it, think you? I would rather lose ten thousand pounds.

Mrs. F. Yes, Mr. Freeman, that is spoken like yourself.

Jen. A smaller sum than that, I am almost sure, — that is to say, I think I may have the boldness to promise, would secure it to you.

Free. How so?

Jen. Mr. Baltimore, you know, has many unpleasant claims upon him.

Free. Debts, you mean: but what of that?

Jen. Only that I can venture to assure you, many of his creditors would have the greatest pleasure in life in obliging me. And when you have bought up their claims, it will be a very simple matter just to have him laid fast for a little while. The disgrace of that situation will effectually prevent the last days of the poll from preponderating in his favour. It is the easiest thing in the world.

Free. (*shrinking back from him.*) Is that your scheme? O fie, fie! the rudest tongued lout in the parish would have blushed to propose it.

Mrs. F. If there should be no other alternative?

Free. Let me lose it then! To be a member of Parliament, and not an honest man! O fie, fie, fie!

(*walking up and down, much disturbed.*)

Jen. To be sure; indeed it must be confessed gentlemen have different opinions on these subjects; and I am free to confess, that I have great pleasure, upon this occasion, in submitting to your better judgment. And now, Sir, as I am sorry to be under the necessity of hurrying away from you upon an affair of some consequence to myself, will you have the goodness to indulge me with a few moments' attention, just whilst I mention to you what I have done in regard to Southerndown church-yard?

Free. Well, it is my duty to attend to that. Have you ordered a handsome monument to be put

up to my father's memory? Ay, to the memory of John Freeman, the weaver. They reproach me with being the son of a mechanic; but I will shew them that I am not ashamed of my origin. Ay, every soul of them shall read it if they please, "erected to his memory by his dutiful son," &c.

Jen. Yes, Sir, I have ordered a proper stone, with a neat plain tablet of marble.

Free. A plain tablet of marble! that is not what I meant. I'll have it a large and a handsome thing, with angels, and trumpets, and deaths' heads upon it, and every thing that a good handsome monument ought to have. Do you think I have made a fortune like a prince to have my father's tombstone put off with a neat plain tablet?

Mrs. F. Now, my dear, you must allow me to know rather more in matters of taste than yourself, and I assure you a plain tablet is the genteelest and handsomest thing that can be put upon it.

Free. Is it?

Mrs. F. Indeed is it. And as for the inscription about his dutiful son and all that, I think it would be more respectful to have it put into Latin.

Free. Very well; if it is but handsome enough I don't care; so pray, Jenkinson, write again, and desire them to put a larger tablet, and to get the Curate to make the inscription, with as much Latin in it as he can conveniently put together. I should be glad likewise, if you would write to the Vicar of Blackmorton to send me the register

of my baptism: I shall want it by and by, on account of some family affairs.

Jen. I shall have the greatest pleasure in obeying your commands. Good day! [EXIT.

Free. Where is the state of the poll, and the list of the out-standing voters?

Mrs. F. Come to my dressing-room, and I'll shew you exactly how every thing stands. You won't surely give up your point for a little —

Free. What do you mean to say?

Mrs. F. Nothing—nothing at all. [EXEUNT.

SCENE III.

BALTIMORE'S *house. Enter* BALTIMORE, *followed by* DAVID, *and speaking as he enters.*

Balt. And so the crowd gave three cheers when good old Humphries tottered up to the hustings to give his vote, as he declared for the grandson of his old benefactor, Mr. Legender Baltimore? I should have liked to have seen it.

Dav. O, your honour, they gave three such hearty cheers! and old goody Robson clapped her poor withered hands till the tears run over her eyes.

Balt. Did she so? She shall be remembered for this! I saw her little grandson running about the other day barefooted — he shall run about barefooted no longer. — And so my friends begin to wear a bolder face upon it?

Dav. Yes, Sir, they begin to look main pert upon it now.

Balt. Well, David, and do thou look pert upon it too. There's something for thee. (*gives him money. A noise of laughing heard without.*) Who is that without? is it not Peter's voice? Ho, Peter!

Enter PETER *followed by* NAT.

What were you laughing at there?

Pet. (*with a broad grin.*) Only, Sir, at 'Squire Freeman, he, he, he! who was riding up the Back-lane, a little while ago, on his new crop-eared hunter, as fast as he could canter, with all the skirts of his coat flapping about him, for all the world like a clucking hen upon a sow's back, he, he, he!

Balt. (*with his face brightening.*) Thou art pleasant, Peter; and what then?

Pet. When just turning the corner, your honour, as it might be so, my mother's brown calf, bless its snout! I shall love it for it as long as I live, set its face through the hedge, and said "Mow!"

Balt. (*eagerly.*) And he fell, did he?

Pet. O Lord, yes, your honour! into a good soft bed of all the rotten garbage of the village.

Balt. And you saw this, did you?

Pet. O yes, your honour, as plain as the nose on my face.

Balt. Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! and you really saw it?

David. (*aside to* Nat.) I wonder my master can demean himself so as to listen to that knave's tales: I'm sure he was proud enough once.

Balt. (*still laughing.*) You really saw it?

Pet. Ay, your honour, and many more than me saw it. Didn't they, Nat?

Balt. And there were a number of people to look at him, too?

Pet. Oh! your honour, all the rag tag of the parish were grinning at him. Wan't they, Nat?

Balt. Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! this is excellent! ha, ha, ha! He would shake himself but ruefully before them. (*still laughing violently.*)

Pet. Ay, Sir, he shook the wet straws and the withered turnip-tops from his back. It would have done your heart good to have seen him.

Dav. Nay, you know well enough, you do, that there is nothing but a bank of dry sand in that corner. (*with some indignation to* Pet.)

Balt. (*impatiently to* David.) Poo, silly fellow, it is the dirtiest nook in the village.—And he rose and shook himself, ha, ha, ha! (*laughing still violently.*) I did not know that thou wert such a humorous fellow, Peter. Here is money for thee to drink the brown calf's health.

Pet. Ay, your honour, for certain he shall have a noggen.

Dav. (*aside.*) To think now that he should demean himself so!

Enter Mrs. BALTIMORE.

Mrs. B. (*aside to* Balt.) Mr. Freeman is at the door: should you wish to receive him? I hurried to give you notice. Will it be disagreeable to you?

Balt. O, not at all. Let him in by all means! (*to the servants.*) I am at home. [EXEUNT *Servants.*

Mrs. B. Now, this is as it should be, my dear Baltimore. I like to see you in this good temper of mind.

Balt. Say no more about that. Things go on prosperously with me at present: there is a gleam of sunshine thrown across us.

Enter FREEMAN *and* CHARLES BALTIMORE.

(*To Free.*) Good morning, Sir: a very good morning to you.

Free. I thank you, Mr. Baltimore. You see I take, notwithstanding all that is going on between us at present, the liberty of a neighbour.

Balt. (*smiling.*) O, no apology, Sir! I am very glad to see you. This is a fine morning for riding on horseback, Mr. Freeman: I hope you have enjoyed it.

Free. (*aside to* Char.) How gracious he is! We are certainly come in a lucky moment.

Char. He is in a monstrous good humour certainly; now is the time to manage him. (*aside to* Free.)

Free. I am much obliged to you, Sir, for this good neighbourly reception; and I flatter myself you will think I am come on a neighbourly visit too.

Balt. O certainly, Sir, but let us talk a little more of this fine morning; it is really a very fine morning for riding on horseback: how does your crop-eared hunter do?

Free. Eating his oats, I dare say very contentedly. All my horses are pretty well off: I buy the best oats in the country for them, and I pay the best price for them too. They are not, to be sure, so well lodged as they shall be. My archi-

tect has just given me in his plan for my new stables: two thousand pounds is the estimate, and I suppose I must allow him to go a little beyond it, to have every thing handsome and complete. That is my way. Will you look at the plan? (*taking a plan from his pocket.*)

Balt. (*drawing back with disgust.*) I have no taste for architecture.

Free. That is a pity now, for it is really a complete thing. By the bye, are not you going to do something to the roof of your offices soon? They'll be down about your ears presently, and the longer you delay that job, the heavier it will be when it comes. (*aside to* Charles, *on seeing* Balt. *bite his lips and turn away from him.*) What is the matter with him now?

Char. (*aside.*) Only a little twitching at his heart: it will soon be off again.

Mrs. Balt. (*aside to* Balt.) For heaven's sake don't let this discompose you; his absurdity makes me laugh.

Balt. (*aside.*) Does it? I did not see you laugh. Well, I am a fool to mind it thus. (*going up to* Free. *with affected good humour.*) I am glad to hear your horses are to be lodged in a manner suitable to their owner's dignity. But you are the best horseman too, as well as the best horse-master, in the county, though your modesty prevents you from talking of it.

Free. O dear, Sir! I am but middling in that way.

Balt. Pray don't let your diffidence wrong you.

What do you jockeys reckon the best way of managing a fiery mettled steed, when a brown calf sets his face through the hedge, and says "Mow?"

Free. Ha, ha, ha! faith you must ask your friend Mr. Saunderson that question. His crop-eared horse has thrown him in the lane a little while ago, and he has some experience in the matter. As for myself, I have the rheumatism in my arm, and I have not been on horseback for a week. (Balt. *looks mortified and disappointed.*)

Mrs. B. (*to* Free.) He is not hurt, I hope?

Free. No, Madam; he mounted again and rode on.

Char. It was no fault of the horse's neither, if the goose had but known how to sit on his back. He has as good blood in him as any horse in —

Free. No, no, Charles! not now if you please. (*going up frankly to* Balt.) And now, Sir, that we have had our little laugh together, and it is a long time, it must be confessed, since we have had a joke together — ha, ha, ha! I like a little joke with a friend as well as any man — ha, ha, ha!

Balt. (*retreating as* Free. *advances.*) Sir.

Free. But some how you have been too ceremonious with me, Mr. Baltimore, and I'm sure I have always wished you to consider me as a neighbour, that would be willing to do you a kind office, or lend you or any of your family a lift at any time.

(*still advancing familiarly to* Balt.)

Balt. (*still retreating.*) Sir, you are very gracious.

Free. So, as I said, since we have had our little joke together, I'll make no more preface about it, my good neighbour. (*still advancing as* Balt. *retreats, till he gets him close to the wall, and then putting out his hand to take hold of him by the buttons,* Balt. *shrinks to one side, and puts up his arm to defend himself.*)

Balt. (*hastily.*) Sir, there is no button here! (*recovering himself, and pointing in a stately manner to a chair.*) Do me the honour, Sir, to be seated and then I shall hear what you have to say.

Free. (*offended.*) No, Sir, I perceive that the shorter I make my visit here the more acceptable it will be; I shall therefore say what I have to say, upon my legs. (*assuming consequence.*) Sir, I have by my interest and some small degree of influence which I believe I may boast of possessing in the country, procured the nomination of a young man to a creditable and advantageous appointment in the East Indies. If you have no objection, I bestow it upon your relation, here, Mr. Charles Baltimore, of whom I have a very good opinion.

Balt. Sir, I am at a loss to conceive how you should take it into your head to concern yourself in the affairs of my family. If Mr. Charles Baltimore chooses to consider himself as no longer belonging to it, he may be glad of your protection.

Mrs. B. My dear Mr. Baltimore, how strangely you take up this matter! Indeed, Mr. Freeman, you are very good: and pray don't believe that we are all ungrateful.

Balt. (*angrily to* Charles.) And you have chosen a patron, have you!

Char. I'm sure I did not think — I'm sure I should be very glad — I'm sure I don't know what to do.

Free. Good morning, Madam; I take my leave. (*slightly to* Balt.) Good morning. [EXIT.

Char. I'm sure I don't know what to do.

Mrs. B. Whatever you do, I hope you will have the civility, at least, to see that worthy man down stairs, and thank him a hundred times over for his goodness.

Char. That I will. [EXIT *hastily.*

Mrs. B. Oh, Baltimore! how could you treat any body so, that came to you with offers of kindness?

Balt. (*striding up and down.*) What would you have had me do? what would you have had me do, Madam? His abominable fingers were within two inches of my nose.

Mrs. B. Oh, Baltimore, Baltimore!

Balt. Leave me, Madam! [EXIT *Mrs. B. with her handkerchief to her eyes.*

(*He still strides up and down; then stopping suddenly to listen.*)

He's not gone yet! I hear his voice still! That fool, with some cursed nonsense or other, is de-

taining him still in the hall! It is past all endurance! Who waits there?

Enter PETER.

What, dost thou dare to appear before me with that serpent's tongue of thine, sloughed over with lies? You dare to bring your stories to me, do you? (*shaking him violently by the collar.*)

Pet. Oh! mercy, mercy, your honour! I'm sure it was no fault of mine that it was not 'Squire Freeman that fell. I'm sure I did all I could to make him.

Balt. Do what thou can'st now, then, to save thy knave's head from the wall. (*throwing* Peter *violently from him after shaking him well; and exit into an inner room, flapping the door behind him with great force.*)

Pet. (*after looking ruefully, and scratching his head for some time*) Well, I sees plainly enough that a body who tells lies should look two or three ways on every side of him before he begins.

[EXIT, *very ruefully.*

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

ACT III.

SCENE I. *Mrs.* Baltimore's *dressing-room. She is discovered sitting by a table, looking over papers.*

Mrs. BALTIMORE.

Well, I have the satisfaction to find that my personal expences, for this last year, have been very moderate; but I am resolved they shall be still more contracted. Though ruin, I fear, cannot be averted, yet, when it does come, I can lift up my unblushing head, and say, "this is no work of mine." No foolish debts of my contracting, Baltimore, shall add to the number of those claims that already so gallingly press upon your proud and irritable mind; and will, perhaps, in the end, drive you from the long and fondly retained habitation of your forefathers. (*leans pensively upon her arm for some time, then continues to look over more papers.*)

Enter CHARLES, *with a slow, sauntering step.*

Char. Let me see what o'clock it is now. What says my watch to it now? (*looking at his watch.*) Pest take it! it is but ten minutes since I look'd last; and I could have sworn it was as good three quarters, or, at least, half an hour, as ever clock tick'd, or ever sand-glass ran. (*yawning and stretching himself.*) Ah! I find it has been but half an hour of a weary man's reckoning, who still sees

two long periods ycleped hours, lying between him and his dinner, like a dreary length of desert waste before the promised land. (*yawning and stretching again.*) My fishing tackle is all broke and destroyed, and 'Squire Sapling has borrowed my pointer. I have sat shaking my legs upon the corn-chest, till every horse in the stable is rubbed down, and the groom, happy dog! has gone with his broom in his hand, to sweep out the yard and the kennel. O dear! O dear! O dear! What shall I do?

Mrs. B. (*rising from the table.*) Poor man! I pity you with all my heart; but I do think I could contrive to find employment for you, if you are inclined to it.

Char. Yes, yes! I am inclined to it! Idleness is tiresome enough, God wot! I am inclined to it, be what it will. But what is it tho'? Have you any skanes of thread to wind?

Mrs. B. No, something better than that, Charles.

Char. What, card-boxes to paste?

Mrs. B. Something better than that too.

Char. Poetry or advertisements to cut out of the news-paper?

Mrs. B. No, no; something better than all these.

Char. (*eagerly.*) It is some new employment then.

Mrs. B. Yes, Charles, a very new one indeed. What would you think of taking up a book and reading an hour before dinner?

Char. (*disappointed.*) Pshaw! is that your fine employment? I thought I was really to have something to do. I'll e'en go to the village again, and hear stories from old Margery, about the election and the old family grandeur of the Baltimores.

Mrs. B. Nay, don't put such an affront upon my recommendation. Do take up this book, and try, for once in your life, what kind of a thing reading quietly for an hour to one's self may be. I assure you there are many good stories in it, and you will get some little insight into the affairs of mankind, by the bye.

Char. No, no; no story read can ever be like a story told by a pair of moving lips, and their two lively assistants the eyes, looking it to you all the while, and supplying every deficiency of words.

Mrs. B. But try it, only try it. You can't surely be so ungallant as to refuse me. (*Gives him a book.*)

Char. Well then, since it must be so, shew me where to begin. Some people, when they open a book, can just pop upon a good thing at once, and be diverted with it; but, I don't know how it is, whenever I open a book, I can light upon nothing but long dry prefaces and dissertations; beyond which, perhaps, there may lie, at last, some pleasant story, like a little picture-closet at the end of a long stone gallery, or like a little kernel buried in a great mountain of shells and of husks. I would not take the trouble of coming at it for all that one gets.

Mrs. B. You shall have no trouble at all. There is the place to begin at. Sit down, then, and make no more objections. (*points out the place, and returns to her papers again.*)

(Charles *sits down with his book : reads a little with one arm dangling over the back of the chair ; then changes his position, and reads a little while with the other arm over the back of the chair ; then changes his position again, and after rubbing his legs with his book hand, continues to read a little more ; then he stops, and brushes some dust off his breeches with his elbow.*)

Mrs. B. (*observing him and smiling.*) How does the reading go on ?

Char. Oh, pretty well ; I shall finish the page presently. (*he reads a little longer, still fidgetting about, and then starting up from his seat.*) By the bye, that hound of a shoemaker has forgot to send home my new boots. I must go and see after them.

Mrs. B. What could possibly bring your boots into your mind at this time, I wonder ?

Char. It is no wonder at all ; for whenever I begin to read, and that is not often, I confess, all the little odd things that have slipp'd out of my head for a month, are sure to come into it then. I must see after the boots tho'.

Mrs. B. Not just now.

Char. This very moment. There is no time to be lost. I must have them to-morrow at all events.

Good bye to you. (*looking to the window as he passes on towards the door.*) Ha! there comes a visitor for you.

Mrs. B. Who is it?

Char. It is Charlotte Freeman, walking very demurely, because she is within sight of the windows.

Mrs. B. I am sorry she is come. I have desired the servants to say I am from home. It is unpleasant to Mr. Baltimore to see any part of that family, and I have promised——no, no, I have ——you must go to inquire after your boots, you say. (*A gentle tap at the door.*) Come in.

Enter CHARLOTTE.

Charl. (*going up affectionately to Mrs.* B.) I thought you would let me in. (*curtseys affectedly to* Charles.)

Mrs. B. Did the servants——

Charl. I saw no servants at all. I stole in by the little door of the shrubbery; for I did not like to go in by the great gate, lest I should meet Mr. Baltimore; and he always looks so strangely at me —But I beg pardon: I see I hurt you by saying so.

Mrs. B. Have you walked far this morning?

Charl. Only so far to see you; for you seem'd unwell when I saw you last, and I could not be happy 'till I inquired after you.

Mrs. B. You are very good, my dear Charlotte, I am very well.

Charl. (*observing her embarrass'd.*) I fear I come unseasonably.

Char. O, no! We were just wishing for some

good girl to come to us ; and when you go home again, I shall have the honour of attending you.

Charl. (*affectedly.*) No, I thank you, there is no occasion ; I know my way very well.

Char. But I can shew you a better way, where there are fine sloes and blackberries on the hedges, if you have a mind to gather any. Eating such sweet fruit puts people into good humour, and cures them of affectation.

Charl. (*disdainfully.*) I dont know what you mean, Sir, by your sloes and your blackberries, but I suppose you want to shew me the place where you cropt your black puppy's ears the other day, and had your fingers well bit for your pains. I wonder whether you or the puppy were in the best humour upon that occasion.

Char. Faith, the puppy and I were very much the better for a piece of your flounced furbelow, which we found upon the hedge, to bind up our wounds for us. For you have a great sense of justice, Miss Freeman; you never take any thing off the bushes, without leaving something in return.

Charl. And you, too, Mr. Charles, are a gentleman of great honesty ; for you would not take a bit of the poor dog's ears off without leaving a bit of your own fingers in his mouth as an equivalent.

Mrs. B. How comes it that you two are always quarrelling, and yet always coming in one another's way? (*to* Char.) You forget : you must go and see after your boots.

Char. O ! I can go to-morrow morning.

Mrs. B. But there is not a moment to be lost:

you must have them at all events, you know. No, no; no lingering here: it is an errand of necessity. (*pointing to the door.*) (*Exit* Char. *unwillingly.*)

Charl. I'm glad you have sent him away; he is so forward and so troublesome. Perhaps I am a little so myself just now. If I am, don't make any ceremony of sending me off; for I see, my dear Mrs. Baltimore, your spirits are not so good as they used to be. O! if I could do any thing to cheer them! (*Looking wistfully at her.*)

Mrs. B. I thank you, my good girl! you are not at all troublesome; you are very pleasant to me; and if it depended upon myself, I should like that we were often together.

Charl. (*taking her hand warmly.*) Should you? Well, and if it depended upon me, I should be always with you. I should go wherever you went, and do whatever you did, and wear the same caps and gowns that you wear, and look just as like you as I could. It is a sad thing that I can get to you so seldom, with those eternal lessons at home, and Mr. Baltimore's stern looks, which almost frighten me when I come here. Do you know I have often thought of writing to you, but then I don't know what to say. It is strange now! I know ladies, who love one another, write such long letters to one another every day, and yet I don't know what to say.

Mrs. B. And I have known, my dear Charlotte, ladies who did not love one another do just the same thing.

Charl. Have you, indeed? La, that is wonderful! But don't you very often write long letters to the friends you love most.

Mrs B. Indeed I don't write very often, nor very long letters to any body; and yet I have some friends whom I very dearly love.

Charl. (*taking Mrs. B.'s hand and skipping about her.*) O! I am so glad to hear that! I thought all dear friends wrote to one another every day, and that every body knew what to say but myself.—When I am with Mama, I think it will be so difficult to become amiable and accomplished, as I ought to be, that I am quite discouraged; but when I am with you, it appears so pleasant and so easy, that I am put quite into good spirits again. —But, no, no! I do every thing so clumsily! and you do every thing so well!

Mrs. B. Don't be so diffident of yourself, Charlotte: remember you are but fifteen, and I am four-and-twenty.

Charl. I wonder how I shall look when I am four-and-twenty. I'm sure, notwithstanding all the pains both Mama and my Governess take with me, I don't think I look very well at present.

Mrs. B. Nay, my good Charlotte, you look very well always, when you don't attempt to look too well. I hope to see you turn out a very agreeable woman.

Charl. Do you think so? I am to go to public places with Mama next winter; and I have overheard her and my Governess whispering together

as if I should have admirers coming about me then. But I don't think I shall. Do you think so?

Mrs. B. (*smiling.*) Indeed, I can't say: perhaps you may, and it is possible you may not; but the less you think of them, the more you will probably have.

Charl. I'm sure I think very little about them. And yet I can't help fancying to myself sometimes, how I shall behave to them.

Mrs. B. Ah! that is but a poor way of employing your fancy. Don't think too much about admirers: they won't admire you the more for that.

Charl. But I won't let them know that I think about them.

Mrs. B. But they will find it out.

Charl. Ha! but I will hold myself very high indeed, and not seem to care a farthing for one of them.

Mrs. B. But they will find it out nevertheless.

Charl. I'm sure I have heard that the young men now-a'-days are no great conjurers.

Mrs. B. That may be very true; but they are all conjurers enough to find that out, though better things should escape their penetration. (*with some alarm.*) I hear Mr. Baltimore coming.

Charl. You seem uneasy. Will he be angry to find me here?

Mrs. B. (*much embarrassed.*) He will be surprised, perhaps; but he won't come here — he is only passing to the library, I hope.

Charl. Ha! but he is coming though! (*creeping behind Mrs.* B.) He is just at the door. I will hide myself behind the open door of this cabinet, and do you stand before me till he goes away.

(*She skulks behind the door of an open cabinet, and Mrs.* B. *stands up close by her to conceal her completely.*)

Enter BALTIMORE.

Balt. The tide is running against me again; and even my own old servants, I have learnt, at this moment, are swilling themselves at the Cat and Bagpipes, with the damn'd ale and roast-beef of mine adversary. I am going to my attorney immediately; if any person on business should call in my absence, detain him till I return.

Mrs. B. Certainly. I wish you a pleasant ride. I think I shall take a little ramble presently, but shall leave your orders with the servants.

Balt. No, don't go out just now, I beg it of you. That little affected jade of Freeman's is prowling about; and I have already confessed to you, that it disturbs me to see you together.

Mrs. B. Ah! you are prejudiced: you talk without knowing her. She is a sweet-tempered, kind-hearted girl, and nature meant her for something very different from what she appears to be.

(Charlotte *behind, catches hold of Mrs.* B.'s *hand and kisses it.*)

Balt. Yes, nature meant her for a clumsy—

Mrs. B. Pray don't delay going to your attorney!

Balt. A clumsy hoiden only; and, under the tuition of her ridiculous mother, she assumes all the delicate airs of a fine lady.

Mrs. B. Well, well, go to your attorney: it is all very harmless.

Balt. Well, well, it is all very harmless, if you will; and I have laughed at a thousand little affected fools, nearly as absurd as herself. But when I see those broad features of her father, stamped so strongly by nature upon her common-place countenance, pretending to wear the conscious importance of superior refinement, it provokes me beyond all patience that you should be so intimate with her.

Mrs. B. She is a girl that will very much improve by any reasonable intimacy, and will very soon become like the people she is with.

Balt. Very well, let her be as little with you, then, and as much with her own foolish absurd mother as possible; and the more ridiculous they both are, the greater pleasure I shall have in seeing them any where but in your company. I assure you, I have no wish to reform them. It is one of the few consolations I receive in my intercourse with this man, to see him connected with such a couple of fools.

Mrs. B. O Baltimore! for heaven's sake stay no longer here!

Balt. Pray what is the meaning of this? are you in your senses?

Mrs. B. Scarcely, indeed, while you remain here, and talk thus.

Balt. What, does it affect you to this pitch then? Are you attached to that girl?

Mrs. B. Indeed I am. (Charl. *behind, catches Mrs.* B.*'s hand again, and kisses it very gratefully.*)

Balt. Well, Madam; I see plainly enough the extent of your attachment to me. (*walking up and down vehemently.*) Methinks it should have been offensive to you even to have stroked the very ears of his dog. And that excrescence, that wart, that tadpole, that worm from the adder's nest, which I abhor —

Mrs. B. For heaven's sake go away! you kill, you distract me!

Balt. Yes, yes, madam; I see plainly enough I am married to a woman who takes no common interest, who owns no sympathy with my feelings.

(*He turns upon his heel in anger to go away, whilst* Charlotte *springs from her hiding-place, and slipping softly after him, makes a motion with her foot as if she would give him a kick in the going out; upon which* Balt. *turns suddenly round and sees her. She stops short quite confounded: and he glancing a look of indignation at his wife, fixes his eyes sternly upon* Charlotte, *who recoiling from him step by step as he sternly frowns upon her, throws herself at last upon Mrs.* B.*'s neck, and bursts into tears.* Balt. *then turns upon his heel angrily and exit.*)

Charl. (*sobbing.*) I shall never be able to look up again as long as I live. There never was any body

like me; for always when I wish to behave best, something or other comes across me and I expose myself. I shall be so scorn'd and laugh'd at!—I'll never enter this house any more—Oh!—oh! oh! Some devil put it into my head, and I could not help it. I'll go home again, and never come a visiting any more—Oh! oh! oh! I am so disgraced!

Mrs. B. Be comforted, my dear Charlotte! It was but a girl's freak, and nobody shall know any thing of it. But, indeed, you had better go home.

Charl. Yes, I'll go home and never return here, any more. But, oh, my dear Mrs. Baltimore, don't despise me.

Mrs. B. No, my dear girl, I love you as much as ever.

Charl. Do you indeed? And yet I must not come to you again. O, I shall wander every morning on the side of the little stream that divides your grounds from ours; and if I could but see you sometimes on the opposite side calling over to me, I should be happy! It is so good in you to say that you love me; for I shall never love myself any more.

(*Exeunt Mrs.* B. *soothing and comforting* Charl. *as they go off.*)

SCENE II.

A small anti-room in FREEMAN'S *house. Enter Mrs.* FREEMAN *with letters in her hand.*

Mrs. Free. (*holding out her letters.*) Pretty well, I think, for one day's post. I should write to my dear Mrs. Languish too, if my extracts from Petrarch were ready.

Enter GOVERNESS *in great haste.*

Gov. O dear, Madame! I don't know what ting I shall do wit Miss Freeman.

Mrs. Free. What is the matter?

Gov. She come in, since a very little time from her walk, and I believe she be to see Madame Baltimore too, as drooping and as much out of spirit as a pair of ruffles wid de starch out of dem; and she sit down so, (*imitating her*) quite frompish, and won't read her lesson to me, though I speak all de good words to her dat I can.

Mrs. Free. Well, go to her again, and I'll follow you immediately, and speak to her myself.

[*Exit* Governess.

(*Mrs.* Free. *after putting up her letters very leisurely, and looking at one or two of them, goes out.*)

SCENE III.

CHARLOTTE *is discovered sitting in a disconsolate posture, on a low stool in the middle of the room; the* Governess *standing by her endeavouring to soothe and coax her, whilst she hitches away from her fretfully, pushing her stool towards the front of the stage every time the* Governess *attempts to soothe her.*

Gov. Do be de good young lady, now, and read over your lesson.

Charl. Can't you let me alone for a moment? I'm not in a humour just now.

Gov. You be in de humours, but in de bad humours, I see. I will put you in de good hu-

mours.! Look here! Fal, lal, de laddy, daddy (*singing fantastically.*) Why don't you smile, Miss? You love dat air, don't you? (*putting her hand soothingly on* Charlotte's *shoulder, and grinning in her face.*)

Charl. (*shaking off her hand impatiently, turning her back to her, and sitting on the other side of the stool.*) I don't like it a bit.

Gov. O, but you do! And den de pretty steps I shew'd you; if you would read your lesson, now, we should dance dem togeder. (*singing and dancing some French steps fantastically.* Why don't you look at me? Don't it amuse you, miss?

Charl. What amusement is it to me, do you think, to see a pair of old fringed shoes clattering upon the boards?

Gov. (*shrugging her shoulders.*) Mon Dieu! she has no taste for any of the elegancies. (*putting her hand upon* Charlotte's *shoulder coaxingly.*) But if you don't speak well de French, and write well de French, de pretty fine gentlemans won't admire you.

Charl. (*shaking off her hand again, and turning from her to sit on the other side of the stool.*) And what do I care for de pretty fine gentlemans, or de pretty fine ladies either? I wish there was not such a thing in the world as either of them.

Gov. (*casting up her eyes.*) Mon Dieu! She wish us all out of de world.

Charl. I'm sure I should live an easier life than I do, if there was not —

Enter Mrs. FREEMAN.

Mrs. Free. What freak is this you have taken into your head, Miss Freeman, not to read with Ma'moiselle. It won't do, I assure you, to follow your own whimsies thus. You must study regularly and diligently, if you would ever become an elegant and accomplished woman.

Charl. I'm sure I shall never become either elegant or accomplished. Why need I scrawl versions eternally, and drum upon the piano-forte, and draw frightful figures till my fingers ache, and make my very life irksome to me, when I know very well I shall never be better than a poor heedless creature, constantly forgetting and exposing myself, after all? I know very well I shall never be either elegant or accomplished.

Mrs Free. Why should you suppose so? there is no merit in being too diffident.

Gov. You should not tink so poor of yourself, Miss. You come on very well. Several lady say dat you are become so like to me in all de airs, and de grace, and de manners, dat you are quite odder ting dan you were.

Charl. No wonder then that they laugh at me.

Gov. (*casting up her eyes.*) Mon Dieu! She is mad! shall I shut her up in her chamber?

Mrs. Free. Stop a little, if you please; she does not speak altogether from the purpose neither. Come, come, Miss Freeman: rouse yourself up, and have some laudable ambition: the distinction of elegant accomplishments is not to be obtained without industry and attention.

Charl. I wish I were with some of the wild people that run in the woods, and know nothing about accomplishments! I know I shall be a blundering creature all my life, getting into scrapes that no body else gets into; I know I shall. Why need I study my carriage, and pin back my shoulders, and hamper myself all day long, only to be laughed at after all?

Mrs. Free. I don't know what you may meet with when you chuse to visit by yourself, Miss Freeman; but in my company, at least, you may be satisfied upon that score.

Charl. And what satisfaction will it be to me that we are ridiculous together? I would rather be laughed at alone than have people laughing at us both, as they do.

Mrs. Free. (*with amazement.*) The creature is beside herself in good earnest! What do you mean, child? Who have you been with? Who has put these things into your head? If Mrs. Baltimore can find no better conversation for you than this kind of insolent impertinence, she is poorly employed indeed.

Charl. It was not Mrs. Baltimore that said so.

Mrs. Free. Who said so then? somebody has, I find.

Charl. It was Mr. Baltimore.

Mrs. Free. And you had the meanness to suffer such words in your presence?

Charl. It was not in my presence neither, for he did not see me.

Mrs. Free. And where was you then?

Charl. Just behind the train of Mrs. Baltimore's gown, till he should go out again.

Mrs. Free. And so you sneaked quietly in your hiding-place, and heard all this insolent abuse? Mean creature! a girl of any spirit would have rushed out upon him with indignation.

Charl. And so did I rush out.

Mrs. Free. And what did you say to him?

Charl. (*sillily.*) I did not say any thing.

Mrs. Free. I hope you resented it then, by the silent dignity of your behaviour.

Charl. (*much embarrassed.*) I'm sure I don't know — I did but give him a little make-believe kick with my slipper, as he went out at the door, when he turned round of a sudden, with a pair of terrible eyes staring upon me like the Great Mogul.

Mrs. Free. A make-believe kick! what do you mean by that?

Charl. La! just a kick on — on —

Mrs. Free. On what, child?

Charl. La! just upon his coat behind as he went out at the door.

Mrs. F. And did you do that? Oh! it is enough to make one mad! You are just fit to live with the Indians, indeed, or the wild Negroes, or the Hottentots! To disgrace yourself thus, after all the pains I have taken with you! It is enough to drive one mad! Go to your room directly, and get sixteen pages of blank verse by

rote. But I'm sure you are fitter company for the pigs than the poets.

Charl. How was I to know that he had eyes in the back of his neck, and could know what was doing behind him?

Mrs. Free. He shall have eyes upon all sides of his head, if he escape from my vengeance. It shall cost him his election, let it cost me what it will (*rings the bell violently.*)—Who waits there? (*Enter a* Servant.) Order the chariot to be got ready immediately. (*Exit* Servant.) I will go to Mr. Jenkinson directly. He has already pointed out the means; and I shall find money, without Mr. Freeman's knowing any thing of the matter, to manage it all well enough.

Charl. La! I'm sure I knew well enough I did wrong; but I did not think of all this uproar about it.

Mrs. Free. Go to your own room, child: I can't abide the sight of you.

[EXEUNT *Mrs.* Free. *on one side of the stage, and* Charl. *and* Governess *on the other.*

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

ACT IV.

SCENE I. *A summer apartment in* BALTIMORE'S *house, with a glass door opened to a lawn. The scene without is seen in the sober light of a calm summer evening, with the sun already set. Enter* BALTIMORE *and Mrs.* BALTIMORE *from an inner room.*

BALTIMORE, *speaking as they enter.*

LET us say no more about it, then. I forgive the little deceit of concealment which my temper, become too hasty of late, may, perhaps, justify. I will confess that the irritation excited in my mind by seeing that girl so frequently with you is unreasonable, is capricious. But you must bear with me a little, my Isabella. It is a part of the infirmity that oppresses me : it is the fretted edge of a deep and rankling———Come, come, come! we'll say no more about it. Let us forswear this subject. Let us now talk, even when we are alone, of light and indifferent things.

Mrs. B. Indeed, I believe it will be safest for us, till this passing storm, it will be but a summer storm I hope, is past over our heads. (*Assuming cheerfulness.*) And now, to begin upon this salutary plan of your's without loss of time, let me boast to you of the beautiful collection of plants I have

nursed with my own hands, in a sly corner of the garden. You have never yet been to see them.

Balt. (*eagerly.*) Ay, even there too.

Mrs. B. What do you mean?

Balt. (*peevishly.*) Go to! you have heard, as well as I, of the ridiculous expence he has been at in seeds, and rare plants, and flower-roots, and nonsense; and of the learned botanist he is to pay so liberally for publishing a catalogue of them for the use of the scientific world—All that abominable ostentation. Ha, ha, ha! He does not know a nettle from a crow-foot on his native fields. Ha, ha, ha!—You don't laugh, I think?

Mrs. B. We were to talk, you know, of indifferent things. But I have forgot to tell you of what really is not indifferent: I had a letter from my sister this morning, and, she says, your little godson is quite recovered from the remains of his illness. (*pauses for an answer.*)

Balt. (*nodding his head, but not attending to her.*) Umph.

Mrs. B. (*coaxingly.*) She says he has become so chattering, and so playful, it is delightful to see him! And he talks of his godfather very often!

Balt. (*nodding again.*) Umph.

Mrs. B. He was always a great favourite of yours.

Balt. (*breaking out vehemently.*) If any man but himself had been guilty of half that ridiculous vanity, the dullest fool in the county would have laughed at him.

Mrs. B. O dear! still dwelling upon these ideas

(*He turns from her, and walks to the bottom of the stage; she sighs deeply, and follows him with her eyes. A long pause.*)

Enter SERVET.

Serv. (*to Balt.*) Excuse me if I intrude, Sir. And you too, my good lady, (*bowing very low to Mrs.* B.) Here is a letter that I received a few moments ago, and I thought it expedient and proper that you should know its contents immediately. (*gives the letter to* Balt.)

Balt. Let me see. (*reads.*) "An unknown well-wisher thinks it right to inform you, that your friend" —

Serv. He ought to have said patron, Sir. I'm sure, I have always been proud to name you as my patron to every body: — the family of Baltimore has always been such to me.

Balt. Well, well, no matter. (*reads again.*) "To ruin your friend, 'Squire Baltimore. His adversary" —

Serv. Meaning Freeman, Sir.

Balt. I understand! (*reads again.*) "His adversary being busy in buying up the claims of some of his principal creditors. If he would walk long at large, let him walk cautiously."

Serv. Meaning that he will lay you up, Sir.

Balt. I understand it perfectly.

Mrs. B. O no, no! Some malicious person has written this.

Balt. Permit me, Madam, to speak to my man of business, without interruption.

Serv. No wonder, Sir, that Mrs. Baltimore should think so. He makes such a good show with his actions, that he must set about such things very cunningly.

Balt. Yes, Servet, thou hast always had some notion of his true character.

Serv. To think that there should be such hypocrisy in the world! It grieves, it distresses me!

Balt. Pooh, man! never mind how many hypocrites there are in the world, if he be but found amongst the number.

Serv. Ay, Sir; but if he get you once into prison —

Balt. Will he not be detested for it?

Serv. But if he should take the borough from you —

Balt. Well! and if he should take my life too, would he not be hanged for it?

Serv. To be sure, there would be some satisfaction in that, if you could peep through your winding-sheet to see it.

Balt. He will now appear to the world in his true colours: I shall now speak boldly of a determined and palpable wrong: It relieves me from a heavy load. Give me thy hand, my friend Servet; thou hast brought me admirable news.

Serv. But, Sir, we must take care of ourselves; for he is come of such a low, cunning, mean set of people —

Balt. Ha! you know this, do you? You know something of his family?

Serv. Yes, I know well enough: and his father every body knows was no better than a — a — a —

Balt. Than a what? — Out with it, man!

Serv. Than a — Than a —

Balt. (*eagerly.*) Than a thief? Is that it? O prove to me, only prove to me, that his father was a thief, and I'll give thee all that I have in the world.

Serv. No, not absolutely that — but no better than a paltry weaver.

Balt. (*disappointed.*) Pooh! I knew that before.

Serv. Yes, every body knows it, to be sure. But there is no time to be lost: I am so zealous about it, that I can't rest till I have further information. I'll take horse directly and go in quest of it. I know where to enquire, and I shall return to you without loss of time.

Balt. Do so, my good friend, and don't be afraid of bringing back what you will call bad news. I shall not shrink from it. (EXIT Servet.

(*Turning to Mrs.* B. *who has been listening to their conversation with great marks of distrust and disapprobation.*)

And so, Madam, you are diffident of all this?

Mrs. B. It will be impossible at this moment to make you view it in the same light that I do.

Balt. Yes, Madam, I knew it would be so with you. He has bewitched and thrown a veil over the understandings of all men! I have perceived it long. Even from the first of his settling in the neighbourhood, my friends have begun to look on me not as they were wont to do. Even my very

tenants and dependants salute me less cheerily. He has thrown a veil over the understandings of all men! He has estranged from me that sympathy and tenderness, which should have supported my head in the day of adversity.

Mrs. B. Ah, my dear Baltimore! It is you who have got a veil, a thick and gloomy veil cast over your mind. That sympathy and tenderness is still the same (*pressing his hand.*) And, if the day of adversity must come, you will be convinced of it. But let us for a while give up thinking of these things: let us walk out together, and enjoy the soothing calmness of this beautiful twilight. The evening-star already looks from his peaceful sky; no sound of busy man is to be heard; the bat, and the beetle, and the night-fly, are abroad, and the pleasing hum of happy unseen life is in the air. Come forth, my husband. The shade of your native trees will wave over your head; the turf your infant feet first trod will be under your steps. Come forth, my friend, and more blessed thoughts will visit you.

Balt. No, no; my native trees and my native lawns are to me more cheerless than the dreary desert. I can enjoy nothing. The cursed neighbourhood of one obnoxious being has changed every thing for me. Would he were — (*clenching his hands and muttering.*)

Mrs. B. O! what are you saying?

Balt. (*turning away from her.*) No matter what.

Enter a little Boy *from the lawn by the glass-door, running wildly and frightened.*

Boy. He'll be drown'd, if nobody runs to save him! He'll be drown'd! he'll be drown'd!

Mrs. B. Has any body fallen into the pond?

Boy. Yes, Madam; into the deepest part of it; and, if nobody don't run to pull him out, he'll be drowned.

Balt. (*running eagerly towards the glass-door.*) I'll go. Dost thou know who it is, boy?

Boy. Yes, to be sure, Sir; it is Squire Freeman's own self. (Balt. *starts and stops short. Mrs. B. clasping her hands and holding them up to heaven, remains in anxious suspence.* Balt. *after a moment's pause, rushes out quickly.*)

Mrs. B. O God! what will this come to! (*throws herself back into a chair, and remains stupid and motionless. The boy stands staring at her.*)

Boy. Are you not well, Ma'am? Shall I call any body? (*She makes no answer; he still stands staring at her.*) She don't speak: she don't look at nothing: I will call somebody. (*Goes to the side-scene, and calls.*) Who's there, I beseech you? O, hear me, hear me! Who's there, I say?

Enter Housemaid *and* Coachman.

Housem. What a bawling you make here, with your dusty feet, you little nasty jackanapes! How dare you for to steal into a clean house?

Coach. If he ben't that little devil that put the cracker under my horse's tail, I have no eyes in

my head. He is always prowling about: there is never a dog hanged nor a kitten drowned in the parish, but he must be after it.

Boy. (*pointing.*) Look there: what is the matter with the lady?

Housem. O mercy on us! my dear good lady: Are you sick, Ma'am? or swooning? or beside yourself? Run, Coachy, stupid oaf! and fetch us something.

Coach. I would run to the farthest nook of the earth, if I only knew what to bring. Will burnt feathers, or a little aqua-vitæ do you any good.

Mrs. B. (*starting up.*) Do you hear any noise? Are they coming yet? I'll go out myself. (*Endeavours to go out, but cannot.* Housemaid *and* Coachman *support her.*)

Enter DAVID *hastily from the lawn.*

Dav. He is saved, Madam!

Mrs. B. O, what say you, David?

Dav. He has saved 'Squire Freeman. He threw himself into the deep water, and plashed about his arms lustily, till he caught him by the hair of his head, and drew him to the bank. One minute more had made a dead man of him.

Mrs. B. Who did that? Who caught him by the hair of the head?

Dav. My master, Madam; and a brave man he is.

Mrs. B. (*holding up her hands in extacy.*) Thy master! ay, and my husband! and God Almighty's good creature, who has formed every

thing good! O, yes! he has made every being with good in it, and will at last make it perfectly so, in some way or other, known only to his wisdom. Ha! I hear a noise on the lawn.

Boy. (*running out.*) I must not lose a sight of the drowned man. For he'll be as dropping wet as any corpse, I dare say; for all that there is life in him. [EXIT.

Mrs. B. I'll go and meet them. I'm strong enough now.

Dav. Let me support you, Madam.

Housem. (*to* Coach. *as they go out.*) La! will he be all wet, do you think, and stretched upon his back? (EXEUNT *by the glass-door into the lawn,* *Mrs.* B. *supported by* DAVID. *Light from a window is now thrown across the path without doors, and discovers* BALTIMORE *and servants carrying* FREEMAN *into the house by another entry. The scene closes.*)

SCENE II.

A room in BALTIMORE'S *house. Enter* SIMEON *and* DAVID.

Dav. Now, my old Simeon, you'll see your master as hearty, after his ducking, as if he were an otter, and could live either in the water or out of it; though we had some trouble to bring him to his senses at first.

Sim. Ay, do let me go to him quickly. It had been a sorrowful day to this grey head if my master had —

Dav. Yes, and if my master had not, as a body may say, put his life in his hand to save him.

Sim. Very true, David, I say nothing against all that; I honour your master for it; thof I must say he has but an ungracious look with him. There is not another gentleman in the neighbourhood, thof I say it myself, that does not stop and say, "How do ye do, Old Simeon?" when he passes me.

Dav. I don't know; I am sure he used not to be ungracious. All the old folks of the parish used to thrust themselves in his way, as if it had been good for the ague, or an aching in the bones, to say, "God bless your honour."

Sim. That must have been before we came amongst you, then. Ha! here comes his Honour.

Enter FREEMAN, *dressed in a night-gown, with* TRUEBRIDGE *and* CHARLES BALTIMORE. *Mrs.* BALTIMORE, *at the same time, enters by another door.*

Sim. (*going eagerly to his master, and kissing his hand, which* FREEMAN *holds out to him.*) God bless and preserve your worthy Honour!

Free. I thank you, Simeon: a good God has preserved me. You have not been much alarmed, I hope?

Sim. No, Sir? I heard of your safety before I heard of your danger; but some how or other it came across my heart, for all that; and I could not but think—I could not—(*pauses and draws the back of his hand across his eyes.*) But the blessings of the aged and helpless have borne

you up : the water could have no commission to hurt you.

True. Well said, good Simeon ! the blessings of the aged and the helpless are of a very buoyant quality. A cork jacket is nothing to them.

Free. Do my wife and daughter know of it ?

Sim. No, please your Honour ; my mistress is not returned from her visit yet, and my poor young lady is closed up in her room with Madumselle, taking on her book-larning, as I suppose.

Free. I'll go home then, before they know any thing of it. (*to Mrs.* B.) My dear Madam, I return you my warmest acknowledgements. You flattered me, that I should have an opportunity, before I leave the house, of thanking, once more, the brave man who has saved my life.

Mrs. B. He will come to you immediately.

Char. (*to Mrs.* B.) Faith ! I went to him myself, as you desired me, and he won't come.

Mrs. B. (*frowning significantly to* Char.) I have just come from him, and he will be here immediately.

Char. You went too, did you ? I could'nt —

(*Mrs.* B. *frowns again, and* Char. *is silent.*)

True. (*to* Free.) You had bétter sit down till he come.

Char. Yes, do sit in this chair in the recess ; for you don't like the light in your eyes, I perceive (*leading* Free. *kindly to the chair.*)

Free. I thank you. You are very good to me, friend Charles. I think you would have lent a helping hand yourself, if you had been in the

way to have saved a poor neighbour from drowning.

Char. I should have been a Pagan else. (Free. *sits down, and they all gather round him.*) Now, my good Sir, it is pleasanter to sit in a dry seat like this, with so many friendly faces round you, than to squash among the cold mud and duck-weed with roaches and eels for your comrades.

Free. Indeed, friend Charles, I shan't contradict you.

Enter BALTIMORE, *going directly across the stage towards the opposite door, by which* Free. *and the others had entered, without perceiving them in the recess.*

Free. He thinks I am still in the bed-room. (*goes behind* Balt. *and lays his hand kindly upon his shoulder.*)

Balt. Nay, my dear Isabella! let me go by myself! I would rather encounter him alone, than when you are all staring upon me.

Free. (*still holding him.*) Ha, ha, ha! My brave deliverer! I have caught you.

Balt. (*turning hastily about and shaking himself loose from his hold.*) Ha! is it you?

Free. (*stepping back disappointed.*) It is me, Sir; and I flattered myself that the overflowings of a grateful heart would not be offensive.

Balt. They are not offensive, Sir! you mistake me. You are too—There is no occasion for all these thanks: I do not deserve them.

Sim. (*vehemently.*) Ah, but you do, Sir! and all the country round will thank you too. There is not a soul of them all, thof he might not care a

brass penny for you before, who will not fill a bumper to your health now, for saving to them his noble and liberal honour. O, Sir! the blessings of every body will be upon your head now.

Balt. (*turning away frowningly from* Sim.) So, so!

Mrs. B. Old Simeon says very true: every body will bless you.

Balt. (*turning away from her.*) This is pleasant, indeed!

Char. I'll be hanged if every old woman in the parish don't foist you into her next Sunday's prayers, along with the Royal Family.

Balt. (*turning away from* Char.) Must I be beleager'd by every fool? (*goes hastily towards the door.*)

Mrs. B. (*aside, running after him.*) You will not go away so abruptly?

Balt. (*aside to her.*) Will there be no end to this damned gratitude? (*about to* Free.) Sir, I am very happy—I—I hope you will have a good sleep after this accident; and I shall be happy to hear good accounts of you to-morrow morning.

Free. No, Mr. Baltimore, we must not part thus. My gratitude for what you have done is not to be spent in words only: that is not my way. I resign to you, and resign to you most cheerfully, all my interest in the borough of Westown.

(*Balt. pauses.*)

True. That is nobly said, Mr. Freeman, and I expected it from you.

Char. (*rubbing his hands, and grinning with de-*

light.) I thought so!—I thought it would come to this: he has such a liberal way with him in every thing.

Balt. (*half aside to* Char.) Wilt thou never give over that vile habit of grinning like a dog? (*going up with a firm step to* Free.) No, Sir; we have entered the lists as fair combatants together, and neither of us, I hope (*significantly*) have taken any unfair advantage of the other. Let the most fortunate gain the day. I will never receive reward for a common office of humanity. That is not my way (*mimicking* Freeman.)

Free. Let me entreat you!

Balt. Mention it no more: I am determined.

Free. It would make me infinitely happy.

Balt. Do me the honour to believe that I speak truth, when I say, I am determined. If you give up the borough, I give it up also.

Free. Then I say no more. I leave with you the thanks of a grateful heart. I should have said, if it had been permitted me, the very grateful affection of an honest heart, that it will never forget what it owes to you but in that place where both affection and animosity are forgotten. (Exit *with emotion, followed by* Charles *and* Simeon.)

Mrs. B. O Baltimore! Baltimore! Will you suffer him to go thus?

Balt. (*going two or three steps after him, and stopping short.*) He is gone now.

Mrs. B. No, he is not; you may easily overtake him. Do—for the love of gentleness and charity!

Balt. (*going hastily towards the door, and stopping short again.*) No, hang it! I can't do it now. (EXIT *hastily by the opposite side.*)

Mrs. B. (*shaking her head.*) I had great hopes from this accident: but his unhappy aversion is, I fear, incurable.

True. Don't despair yet: I prophecy better things. But do not, my dear Madam, before Baltimore at least, appear so anxious about it. It serves only to irritate him.

Mrs. B. Is it possible to be otherwise than anxious? This unlucky prejudice, gradually gaining strength from every little trivial circumstance, embitters all the comfort of our lives. And Freeman has so many good qualities — he might have been a valuable friend.

True. Very true; he is liberal, good-tempered, and benevolent: but he is vain, unpolished, and, with the aid of his ridiculous wife to encourage him, most provokingly ostentatious. You ought to make some allowance for a proud country gentleman, who now sees all the former dependants of his family ranging themselves under the patronage of a new, and, what he will falsely call, a mean man.

Mrs. B. O, I would make every allowance! but I would not encourage him in his prejudice.

True. The way to reclaim him, however, is not to run directly counter to it. I have never found him so ready to acknowledge Freeman's good qualities as when I have appeared, and have really been half provoked myself with his

vanity and magnificence. When we would help a friend out of the mire, we must often go a little way into it ourselves.

Mrs. B. I believe you are right. Ah! Truebridge! if you had been more amongst us lately, we should not now, perhaps, have been so unhappy. He would have listened more to you than to any other friend.

True. Have good comfort: I don't despair.

(EXEUNT.

SCENE III.

Night. An open space before the Blue Posts: the scene dark, except where the light gleams from the open door of the house. A noise of drinking and merriment heard within. Enter some of Baltimore's *voters, &c. from the house, carrying a table, a bowl of punch and glasses, which they set down in the porch, and place themselves round on the benches at the door.*

Sailor. Now, messmates, let us set down our bowl here. We have been long enough stow'd in that there close smoky hold, while the fresh air has been playing on the decks. Let us sit down and be merry! I am return'd home in a good jolly time, old neighbours; let us enjoy it.

First Vote. Ay, I remember at our last election, when 'Squire Burton was chosen, we drank a hearty bowl in this very porch, and neighbour Bullock, the tanner, sat, as it were, in that very corner. Rest his soul! he loved his country, and his king, and his cause, and his candidate, as well as any heart in Old England.

Second Vote. Ay, and he was always ready to knock any body down that was not as hearty as himself. That was what I liked in him. That was the true spirit. That was the true roast beef of Old England.

First Vote. And he had such a good knack at a toast. Come, stand up, Mr. Alderman. We have drunk already to the ancient family of the Baltimores, give us some other good public toast. You have a good knack at the business too. I would give you one myself, but then I doesn't know how to do it for want of education.

Ald. (*standing up conceitedly.*) May all the king, and the queen, and the royal family, and all the rest of the nobility and members of parliament, serving over them and under us be good; and may all us, serving under them again be — be — be happy and be good too, and be—and be—

Second Vote. Just as we should be.

First Vote. Ay, just so. Very well and very nicely said, Mr. Alderman!

Second Vote. But does nobody drink to the navy of old England.

Ald. Yes, man: stop a little, and I'll have a touch at that too.

First Vote. Ay, do so. I stand up for the British navy; that I do. The sea is our only true friend either by land or by water. Come, give us a sailor's song, Will Weatherall. I have lived upon dry land all my days, and never saw better than a little punt-boat shov'd across the ferry for a sixpence; but some how or other I have a kindness for

every thing that pertains to the great salt sea, with all the ships, and the waves roaring, and all that; and whenever I sees a good heart of oak seated at an alehouse door with his glass in his hand, my heart always turns to him, an there should be a hundred men besides. Give us a song, man.

Sailor. That I will. Hang me if thou does'n't deserve to feed upon biscuit.

SONG.

Merry mantling social bowl,
Many a cheerful kindly soul
Fills his glass from thee:
Healths go round, care is drown'd,
Every heart with lighter bound
Gen'rous feels and free.

Cann and beaker by thy side,
May'st thou oft' in flowing pride
Thus surrounded be:
And shame befal the narrow mind,
That to a messmate proves unkind,
Who once has fill'd his glass from thee!

Whate'er our state, where'er we meet,
We still with kindly welcome greet
The mate of former jollity:
Far distant, in a foreign land,
We'll give to all a brother's hand
That e'er have fill'd their glass from thee.

Enter MARGERY, *in a great fury.*

Mar. Dash down your bowl, and break all your glasses in shivers! Are you sitting singing here, and 'Squire Baltimore hurried away to prison by his vile rascality creditors? Shame upon your red chops! Who pays for the liquor you are drinking?

All. You're wrong in the head, Margery.

Mar. Ye're wrong in the heart, and that's a worse thing, ungrateful punch-swillers! You would be all up on end in a moment else; for I saw them lay their detestable paws upon him with mine own eyes. Rise up every skin of you, or I'll break the bowl about your ears! I'll make the liquor mount to your noddles, I warrant you!

All. (*starting up.*) Which way did they go?

Mar. Come, follow me, and I'll shew you. Let them but come within reach of my clench'd fist, and I'll teach them to lay hands upon his honour! An esquire and a gentleman born.

(EXEUNT, *every body following her with great noise and hubbub.*)

END OF THE FOURTH ACT.

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*A vaulted passage in a prison. Enter* Keeper, *with several* Turnkeys *bearing pots of porter, &c. for the prisoners.*

Keep. (*calling to somebody without.*) Take another pot of porter to the dog-stealer in the north ward, and a Welsh rabbit to his comrade. (*to another who enters with a covered dish.*) Where have you been all this time?

1*st Turn.* Waiting on the rich debtor in the best chamber; he has fallen out with his stew'd carp, because the sauce of it be'nt cook'd to his liking.

Keep. I'm sorry for that: we must spare no pains upon him.

Enter 2d Turnkey.

2*d Turn.* (*holding out a small jug.*) Come, come, this won't do. Transportation-Betty says, nothing but true neat Hollands for her; and this here gin you have sent her be'nt fit for a gentlewoman to drink.

Keep. Yes, yes; travell'd ladies are woundy nice. However, we must not quarrel with her neither: take it to the poor author in the debtor's ward; it will be good enough for him.

Enter TRUEBRIDGE.

True. What part of the prison is Mr. Baltimore in?

Keep. I'll shew you, Sir; follow me.

True. I thought to have found him in your own house. In the common prison?

Keep. It is his own fault, Sir; he would go no where else; and the more miserable every thing is about him, the better he likes it. His good lady could scarcely prevail upon him to let us set a couple of chairs in his room.

True. Has she been long here?

Keep. Better than an hour, I should think.

True. Does he seem much affected?

Keep. Anan, Sir?

True. I mean, much cast down.

Keep. O, Lud; no, Sir! I dare say not; you know people are used to such things every day.

True. Very true, Mr. Keeper, I forgot that—Show me the way. [EXEUNT.

SCENE II.

A prison. BALTIMORE *is discovered sitting in a thoughtful posture, with Mrs.* BALTIMORE *resting her arm on the back of his chair, and observing him attentively.*

Balt. (*after starting up with alacrity, and walking several times up and down.*) And they are calling out, as they go thro' the streets, that I am a true Baltimore, and the son of their old benefactor?

Mrs. B. They are, indeed. The same party that assembled to attempt your rescue, are still parading about tumultuously, and their numbers are continually increasing.

Balt. That's right! The enemy, I hope, has heard the sound of it round his doors: they have bid him a good morrow cheerily.

Mrs. B. I don't believe they suspect him yet, for it is too bad to imagine.

Balt. (*exultingly.*) But they will all know it soon. All the world will know it. Man, woman, and child will know it; and even clothed in the very coats his ostentatious bounty has bestow'd upon them, the grey-headed labourers will curse him. Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! How many chaldrons of coals, and hogsheads of ale, and well fatten'd oxen will, in one untoward moment, be forgotten by those ungrateful hinds! Ha, ha, ha! The very children will call to him as he passes by. Methinks I tread lightly on the floor of this dungeon, with the step of an injured man who rises from the grasp of oppression. Raise thy drooping head, my Isabella: I am a thousand times more happy than I have been: all mankind will sympathize with me now.

Mrs. B. Every honest breast, indeed, must detest baseness and hypocrisy.

Balt. Ay, thou speak'st with some energy now. Come to my heart! there will be sympathy between us. Now, thou art the wife of Baltimore! But oh! my Isabella! a poor man's wife has many duties to fulfil.

Mrs. B. None that I will not most cheerfully fulfil.

Balt. Ah! thou art a fair flower planted on an ungracious soil, and I have nursed thee rudely.

Mrs. B. O, no! you were most kind and gentle once.

Balt. And I will be so again, Isabella: for this viper gnaw'd at my heart, and I could be gentle to nothing; not even to thee. But my heart feels lighter now: I will be rough to thee no more.

Enter TRUEBRIDGE.

Ha! my friend! good morning to you! Nay, nay: (*taking his hand frankly.*) don't be afraid to look at me: I wear no desponding face upon it. (*pointing to the bare walls of his prison.*) You see what a happy thing it is to have a liberal, generous, magnificent rival to contend with. Have you seen any of my good noisy friends in your way?

True. Yes, crowds of them; and I really believe this arrest will gain you your election. There is something in man that always inclines him to the side of the oppressed.

Balt. Ay, by God! and the savage feels it more strongly than the philosopher.

True. He was always a ridiculous ostentatious fellow; but if Freeman has thought to ruin your cause by the unworthy means you hint at, he is the greatest fool as well as the greatest knave in the community.

Balt. (*ironically.*) Don't be too severe upon him! he has been bred to turn his money to good

account, you know: a purchased debt is his property as well as a bale of broadcloth; and he has a great many charitable deeds and bountiful donations to put into the balance against one little underhand act of unmanly baseness.

True. Hang all his bountiful donations! If he has done this, I will curse him by the hour-glass with any good fellow that will keep me company.

Balt. Nay, nay, nay! you are warm, Truebridge. You are of an irritable disposition. You have no charitable allowances to make for the failings of good people. Ha, ha, ha,!

Enter Turnkey.

Turn. Mr. Freeman begs to be admitted to see Mr. Baltimore.

Balt. (*stretching out his arm vehemently.*) Does he, by my conscience! (*to* True.) What think you of this?

True. If things are as we suspect, it does, indeed, exceed all ordinary calculations of effrontery.

Balt. (*to* Turn.) Let him be admitted. (EXIT Turn.) Now we shall see the smoothness of his snake's skin; but the switch, not the sword, shall scotch it. (*walks hastily up and down.*)

Enter FREEMAN.

Balt. (*stopping short upon his entrance, and assuming an ironical respect.*) Good morning, worthy Sir. You are the only man in England; I may say in Europe; nay, I will say in the whole habitable globe, for you love magnificence, Mr. Free-

man, whose dauntless confidence could have been wound up to the steady intrepidity of such a visit.

Free. (*simply.*) O, no, my friend; don't praise me more than I deserve. In courage to run to the assistance of a friend, you yourself have set me the example; and my character, I hope, will never be found deficient in any thing that becomes a good neighbour, and an honest man.

Balt. (*smiling sarcastically.*) Certainly, Sir; be at all pains to preserve, in the public opinion, your invaluable character. I would really advise you to have a certificate of all your eminent virtues drawn up and sign'd by every housekeeper in the parish. Your wonderful liberalities in worsted hose and linsey-woolsey petticoats; your princely subscriptions for bridges and market-places; and your noble donations to lying-in hospitals, have raised your reputation over the whole country: and if the baseness of treacherously entrapping a fair and open rival, whom you profess'd to respect, can throw any shade upon your sublime virtues, you have only to build a tower to the parish church, or a new alms-house, and that will set every thing to rights again. (*aside to* True.) Look how he draws in his detestable mouth, and stares upon me like a cat!

Free. I now perceive, Sir, the point of your discourse, and I forgive every thing that it insinuates. I might say many things, but there is just one simple answer I will return to it. All my fortune is at this moment at your disposal. You shall now be a free unencumber'd man, owing no man any

thing. For how can you be said to be indebted to one who owes even his own life to you. To tell you this, was my errand here.

Balt. (*shrinking back, and then recovering himself with proud disdain.*) And I, noble Sir, have one simple answer to return to you: I will rather remain in this prison till the hand of death unbolt my door than owe my enlargement to you. Your treachery and your ostentatious generosity are equally contemptible.

Free. On the word of an honest man, I have had no knowledge of this shameful arrest.

Balt. And on the word of a gentleman I believe you not.

Free. Will you put this affront upon me?

Balt. (*smiling maliciously.*) Only if you are obliging enough to bear it. Do entirely as you please. (*aside to* True. *turning away contemptuously from* Free.) See how like a sneaking timid reptile he looks. (*walks up and down proudly.*)

Mrs. B. much alarmed. (*to* Free.) O leave him! leave him! You must not speak to him now: he knows not what he says.

True. (*aside to* Free.) Go away for the present, Mr. Freeman, and I will call upon you by and bye. If you are an honest man, you are a noble one.

Free. (*impressively.*) In simple truth, then, I am an honest man; and shall be glad to have some discourse with you whenever you are at leisure.

[EXIT.

Balt. (*stopping short in his walk, and looking*

round.) Is he gone? (*to* True.) what did you think of that? Was it not admirable? (*endeavouring to laugh, but cannot.*) The devil himself will now appear a novice in hypocrisy.

True. Faith! Baltimore, I cannot think him guilty: he wears not the face of a guilty man.

(Baltimore's *countenance falls: he turns away abruptly from* Truebridge, *and walks up and down in disorder.*)

Mrs. B. (*perceiving* Freeman's *hat on the ground, which he had dropt in his confusion.*) Mr. Freeman has left his hat behind him. (*As she stoops to lift it* Balt. *runs furiously up to her, and prevents her.*)

Balt. Touch not the damned thing, or I will loath thee! Who waits without? hollo! Turnkey! (*Enter* Turnkey; *and he, giving the hat a kick with his foot, tosses it across the stage.*) Take away that abomination, do.

[EXIT *hastily into an inner apartment.*

True. Don't lose hopes of fair weather, my dear Madam, tho' we are now in the midst of the storm. Follow and soothe him, if it be possible, and I'll go in the mean time to Freeman.

[EXEUNT *severally.*

SCENE III.

An open scattered street in a small country town. Enter JENKINSON *and* SERVET *by opposite sides; and are going to pass without observing one another.*

Serv. (*calling to* Jenk.) Not so fast, Mr. Jenkinson; I was just going to your house.

Jenk. And I was just going to do myself the pleasure to call at your's.

Serv. And you was glad to go quickly along, I believe. It would neither be pleasant nor safe for you, perhaps, to meet the new member in his chair, with all his friends round him. "Baltimore for ever!" could not sound so very pleasantly in your ears. Ay, Mr. Jenkinson! You have made a fine hand of this business for a man of your pretensions in the profession.

Jenk. I believe, Mr. Servet, I may be permitted to assume to myself, without the imputation of vanity, as much professional dexterity in this affair as the most able of my contemporaries could have brought into the service. Every thing has been done that the very nicest manœuvres of the law would admit of. Who could have thought of a rich friend, from nobody knows where, paying Baltimore's debts for him? Who could have thought of those fools taking him up so warmly upon his imprisonment, in manifest contradiction to the old proverb, that "rats and vermin leave a falling house?" Who could have

thought so many of Mr. Freeman's friends would have stayed from the poll, too, after solemnly promising their votes? I am sure you are too polite not to do me the justice to confess that these things were not to be counted upon. A pinch of your snuff, if you please: you keep the best rappee of any gentleman in the country.

Serv. But what can you say for yourself in the present business, Mr. Jenkinson? I'm sure my client, Mr. Baltimore, has given you advantages enough, if you had known how to use them. Since his quarrel with Mr. Freeman in the prison, have not you and I gone between them with at least half-a-dozen of messages, unknown to their friends? and nothing but a paltry meeting with pistols to come of it after all! It is a disgrace to the profession.

Jenk. What could I have done, Mr. Servet?

Serv. What could you have done! Has not my client by my mouth, told your client in pretty plain terms, in return to all his amicable advances, that he is a liar, and a hypocrite, and a knave, and a coward; and with but very little difficulty on your part a kick or a cudgel might have been added: and do you ask me what was to be done with all this? A meeting with pistols, indeed! It is a disgrace to the profession. I once procured for a smug-faced client of mine a good douse o'the chops, which put a couple of hundred pounds into his pocket; enabled him thereby to run off with a rich heiress, and make his fortune, as you may well say, by a stroke. As for myself, I put, of course, double the sum into my own.

Jenk. Do me the favour to believe, my worthy Sir, that I have always looked up to your superior abilities with the profoundest respect. But have a little patience: and do me the honour to suppose I am not altogether a novice. We may have a duel first, and a law-suit afterwards. I suppose we shall have the pleasure of meeting at the place and hour appointed?

Serv. Never doubt that. But I hear the crowd coming this way. (*some of the crowd begin to enter, and a great noise is heard at a distance.*) Let us avoid them, and talk further of this matter as we go.

(EXEUNT Jenk. *and* Serv. *Enter more of the crowd.*)

First Mob. Well, I can't say but it was a rare speech.

Second Mob. And very nicely delivered.

First Mob. Ay, he is a nice man.

First Woman. And such a sweet-faced gentleman. He'll stand by his king and country, I warrant ye.

First Mob. (*to* third Mob.) But you lost it all, neighbour Brown, you was so long of coming. "Gentlemen!" said he, and he bowed his head so, "the honour you have this day preferred me to"—

Second Mob. No, no, man; "that you have conferred upon me."

First Mob. Well, well, where's the difference? "I shall ever consider upon."——

Second Mob. Reflect upon.

First Mob. Did not I say reflect upon? "With

—with great joy;" no "great" — I don't know very well; but he meant, as one should say, as how he would think upon us with good-will. And then, quoth he — but first of all you know, he said, stretching out his hand so, that "the confidence imputed to him."

Second Mob. Tut, man! reposed upon him.

First Mob. Did not I say so as plain as a man could speak? — "Was a trust that, with the greatest scrupulousness of regard" — That is to say, you know, that he won't sell his vote for a pension: nor give away our poor little earnings to feed a parcel of lazy placemen and courtiers, Lord help us! And that he won't do.

Third Mob. No, no! I'll answer for him. Why, I have heel-pieced his shoes for him when he was no bigger than a quart-pot.

First Mob. But what pleased me most of all was, when he waved his hands in this fashion, and said, "Gentlemen, it has always been the pride and boasting——

Second Mob. Pride and boast.

First. Mob. No, indeed; I say pride and boasting, Thomas Truepenny; have not I a pair of ears in my head as well as you?

Second Mob. Well, well, boasting be it then!

First Mob. Yes, "boasting of this honourable borough to support its own dignity and independency against all corruptful encroachments." And then he went on to tell us, you know, all about the glory and braveness of our ancestors — O! let him alone for a speech! I'll warrant ye, when he

stands up among the great men in that there house of parliament, he'll set his words together in as good a fashion as the best of them.

Second Mob. Yes, to be sure, if he does it in the fashion that you have been a-shewing us.

Second Woman. O la! there he comes, and the pretty chair and all the pretty ribbons flying about! Do come and let us run after him. (*Enter a great crowd, and* BALTIMORE *carried in a chair ornamented with boughs and ribbons, &c. on the back ground, and crossing over the bottom of the stage, exeunt with acclamations: the first crowd joining them.*)

SCENE IV.

An open space in a forest, surrounded with thickets, and fern, &c. Enter BALTIMORE *and* SERVET, *looking out several ways as they enter.*

Serv. Now I do see them a coming!

Balt. You have discovered them half-a-dozen of times already since we entered the forest: are they at hand?

Serv. (*still looking out thro' some bushes.*) They an't far off, but I don't know how it is, they keep always a-moving, and always a-moving, and yet they never come nearer.

Balt. He stops to take heart, perhaps. (*smiling with malicious satisfaction.*)

Serv. Yes, poor man, ha, ha, ha! his mind is disturb'd enough, no doubt. But you, Sir, are so composed! You have the true strong nerves

of a gentleman. Good blood always shews itself upon these occasions. (*looking out again.*) Yonder now I could tell you, even at this distance, by that very manner of waving his pocket handkerchief that he is in a devilish quandary.

Balt. Indeed! dost thou already discover in him the disturbed gait of a frightened man? This is excellent!—Let me look! let me look! (*looking thro' the bushes with great satisfaction and eagerness.*) Where, Servet?

Serv. Look just between the birch-tree and the little gate.

Balt. (*peevishly.*) Pooh, nonsense! It is a colt feeding amongst the bushes, and lashing off the flies with his tail.

(*As they are looking, enter* FREEMAN *and* JENKINSON *behind them.*)

Free. Good morning, gentlemen: I hope we have not kept you waiting.

Balt. I am here, Sir, at your request, to give you the satisfaction you require, and I have waited your time without impatience.

Free. Ah, Mr. Baltimore! it is a cruel necessity that has compell'd me to require such a meeting as this from a man to whom I owe my life. But life, with contempt and degradation in the eye of the world annexed to it, is no benefit: you have cruelly compell'd me —

Balt. Make no apology, Sir, for the invitation you have given me to this place: it is the only one in my life that I have received from you with pleasure, and obey'd with alacrity.

Free. You will regret, perhaps, when it is too late, that some explanation, on your part, did not prevent ——

Jenk. Yes, Sir, some little explanation of your words. The most honourable gentleman is always free to confess that words are not always intended to convey the meaning they may obviously seem to express.

Balt. (*contemptuously.*) I make no doubt, Sir, that you can find a great many different meanings to the same words. A lie may be easily turn'd into a slight mistake, or a villain into a gentleman of deep and ingenious resource, in your polite dictionary; but I am a plain, unpolish'd man, Mr. Jenkinson, and I have but one sense in which I offer what I have said by the mouth of my friend here (*pointing to* Serv.) to Mr. Freeman, and to the world, unretracted and unexplain'd (*aside to* Serv.) Does he not look pale?

Serv. O, very pale.

Free. Then, Mr. Baltimore, you compel a man of peace to be what he abhors.

Balt. I am sorry, Sir, this business is so disagreeable to you: the sooner we dispatch it, in that case, the better. Take your ground (*aside to* Serv.) Does he not look very pale?

Serv. (*aside.*) O, as white as a corpse.

Free. I believe you are right (*to* Serv. *and* Jenk.) Mark out the distance, gentlemen: you know what is generally done upon these occasions. I am altogether ignorant. You seem to be ready, Mr. Baltimore, and so am I.

Serv. (*aside to* Balt.) He would bully it out now, but he is in a great quandary for all that.

Balt. (*aside to* Serv. *angrily.*) No, hang him, he is as firm as a rock! (*aloud to* Free.) I am perfectly ready also, Sir. Now take your fire.

Free. No; I cannot call you out, and take the first fire myself: this does not appear to me reasonable.

Balt. You are the insulted man.

Free. Yes, but I am the challenger, and must insist on first receiving your's.

(*They take their ground, and* Balt. *is about to fire, when* Truebridge *and* Charles Baltimore *break in upon them through the bushes.*)

True. (*seizing* Baltimore's *arm.*) Hold your rash hand, madman, and make not yourself accursed!

Balt. What do you mean, Truebridge?

True. (*pointing to* Free.) That there stands before you the unknown friend ——

Free. (*to* True. *eagerly.*) Hold! hold! remember your promise: I have bound you to it.

True. But you release me from that promise by effecting this meeting unknown to me, when I had every claim upon your confidence. I will not hold my tongue.

Balt. For God's sake, then, tell the worst thou hast got to say, for I am distracted!

True. There stands before you, then, that unknown friend; the great uncle of your wife, as I suffered you to suspect, who has paid all your debts, open'd your prison doors, and even kept

back his own friends from the poll to make you the member for Westown. (Balt. *staggers back some paces, and the pistol falls from his hand.*)

Char. (*capering with joy.*) O, brave and noble! this makes a man's heart jump to his mouth! Come here, Mr. Spitfire, (*taking up the pistol*) we shall have no more occasion for you.

Balt. (*giving* Charles *an angry push, as he stoops down close by him to lift the pistol.*) Get away, damn'd fool! Does this make you happy?

True. Fie, Baltimore! It is not manly in thee to be thus overcome.

Balt. If thou had'st lodged a bullet in my brain, I had thank'd thee for it.

True. And is there nothing, then, within your breast that is generously called forth to meet the noble gratitude of a liberal mind? A mind which has strove to acquit itself of the obligation that it owes to you, and to make you ample reparation for an injury which you have suffered on his account, tho' entirely unknown to him. There is nothing in your breast that comes forth to meet such sentiments as these. Injuries and oppression are pleasing to your mind; generosity and gratitude oppress it. Are these the feelings of a brave man? Come, come! (*taking his arm gently.*)

Balt. Hold away! I am fool'd, and depress'd, and degraded! (*turns away from him abruptly.*)

True. Well, then, battle out with your own proud spirit the best way you can. Freeman, I must agree to it, is a magnificent, boasting, osten-

tatious fellow; and devil take me, if I could bear to have any reciprocity in good offices with him myself!

Balt. By the Lord! Truebridge, I'll run you thro' the body if you say that again.

True. Ha! come nearer to me then. I shall now tell Freeman of an obligation he owes to you, Baltimore, and we shall see if he bears it more graciously.

Free. I owe my life to his courage.

True. Yes, but it is not that. Come nearer me, Baltimore. (*to* Free.) You were anxious, I believe, to erect a monument to the memory of your father.

Free. Yes, Sir; and Mr. Jenkinson has written for me to have it accomplished.

True. And also, at the same time, to have a certificate of your baptism?

Free. Yes, Sir, some family business required it; but I have yet received no answer.

True. No; the clergyman to whom you wrote is my particular friend; he has made the enquiries you desired; and the result is of such a nature that he has thought it necessary to be the bearer of it himself.

Free. What may it be?

True. He is at my house, and will inform you of every thing minutely; but just at this moment, I can't help telling you myself, that to erect a monument to the memory of your father is unnecessary, as Mr. Baltimore has already piously saved you that trouble.

Free. What do you mean by that? I am a man of peace, but I will tear the heart out of any one who dares to insult my father's memory.

True. He has done it in sober piety.

Free. What! erected a monument for my father in the parish church of Southerndown?

True. No, in the parish church of Westown.

Free. My father is not buried there.

True. Ay, but he is indeed. One church, one grave, one coffin, contains both your father and his.

Free. O, God! what is this? (Balt. *starts and puts his hands before his eyes.*)

Char. I would give a thousand pounds that this were true.

True. (*to* Char.) Thou hast lost thy money then. But prithee be quiet, Charles! (Jenkinson *and* Servet *look ruefully upon one another.*)

Free. (*after a pause.*) Was not my mother the wife of Freeman?

True. Yes, and, I believe, his faithful wife; but she was your mother first.

Free. She was seduced and betray'd?

True. We will not, if you please, enter into that part of the story at present. My account says, that she married, after bringing you into the world, a poor but honest man; that the late Mrs. Baltimore discovered her some years afterwards, sympathised with her misfortune, and from her own pin-money, for the family affairs were even then very much involved, paid her a yearly sum

for the support and education of her son, which laid the foundation of his future wealth and prosperity.

Balt. (*stepping forward with emotion.*) Did my mother do this?

True. Yes, Baltimore, she did; till Mrs. Freeman, informed of the state of your father's affairs, with an industry that defied all pain and weariness, toiled day and night to support the aspiring views of her son, independent of a bounty which she would no longer receive, tho' it was often and warmly press'd upon her.

Free. (*with emotion.*) And did my mother do that?

True. She did indeed.

Free. Then God bless her! I do not blush to call myself her son.

True. (*stretching out his hands to* Balt. *and* Free.) Now, don't think that I am going to whine to you about natural affection, and fraternal love, and such weaknesses; I know that you have lived in the constant practice of all manner of opposition and provocation towards one another for some time past; you have exercised your tempers thereby, and have acquired habits that are now, perhaps, necessary for you. Far be it from me to break in upon habits and gratifications! Only, as you are both the sons of one father, who now lies quietly in his grave, and of the good women, for I call them both good, who bore no enmity to one another, tho' placed in a situation very

favourable for its growth, do, for the love of decency, take one another by the hand, and live peaceably and respectably together! (*taking each of them by the hand.*)

Balt. (*shaking off* True.) Get away, Truebridge, and leave us to ourselves.

(True. *retires to the bottom of the stage, and makes signs for* Jenk. Serv. *and* Char. *to do so too: they all retire.*)

(Balt. *and* Free. *stand looking at one another for some time without speaking.* Balt. *then drawing nearer to* Free. *clears his voice, and puts on the action of one who is going to speak emphatically; but his energy is suddenly dropt, and he turns away without speaking. He draws near him a second time, clears his voice again, and speaks in broken accents.*)

Balt. I have been to you, Mr. Freeman, most unreasonable and unjust. I have — I have — my behaviour has been stern and ungracious — But — but my heart — O! it has offended beyond — beyond even the forgiveness of a — of a ——

Free. (*eagerly.*) Of a what, Mr. Baltimore?

Balt. Of a brother.

Free. God bless you for that word! Are you the first to pronounce it? Yes, I will be a brother, and a father, and a friend, and an every thing to you, as long as there is breath in my body. And tho' we do not embrace as brothers ——

Balt. (*rushing into his arms.*) Ah! but we do! we do! most heartily! But I have something to

say. Let me lean against this tree for a little. (*leans his back against a tree.*)

Free. What would you say?

Balt. (*in a broken voice.*) I am — I am where I ought not to be. Your generosity imposed upon you — the borough of Westown is vacant.

Free. No; it is filled with the man for whom I will henceforth canvass, thro' thick and thin, every shire, town, and village in the kingdom, if need be: the borough of Westown is not vacant.

Balt. (*endeavouring to open his waistcoat and collar.*) My buttons are tight over my breast: I can't get this thing from my throat. (Free. *attempts to assist him.*)

True. (*running forward from the bottom of the stage.*) Let me assist you, Baltimore.

Balt. No, no, hold away: he will do it for me. I feel the touch of a brother's hand near my breast, and it does me good.

True. (*exulting.*) Ha! is it thus with you? Then we have triumphed! conquest and victory!

Char. (*tossing up his hat in the air.*) Conquest and triumph and victory! O it is all right now!

True. Yes, Charles, thou may'st now be as boisterous as thou wilt.

Jenk. (*aside to* Serv.) We have made but a bad business of it here.

Ser. (*aside to* Jenk.) It was all your fault. (*They quarrel in a corner, whilst* Free. *and* True. *are occupied with* Balt.; *and* Charles *runs exultingly about, tossing his hat in the air.*)

Enter nearly at the same time, by opposite sides, *Mrs.* Baltimore *and Mrs.* Freeman, *with* Charlotte.

Mrs. B. (*alarmed.*) O! you are wounded, Baltimore.

True. No, no! there are no wounds here: we are victorious.

Mrs. B. Over whom?

True. Over a whole legion of devils! or, at least, over one great black one, who was as strong and as stubborn as a whole legion.

Mrs. B. (*joyfully.*) Ha! and is he overcome at last! Let me rejoice with you, my Baltimore! We have found our lost happiness again.

Balt. We have found something more, my dear Isabella: we have found a brother. (*presenting* Free. *to Mrs.* B.)

Mrs. B. Yes, I knew you would find in this worthy man a friend and a brother.

Balt. Nay, nay! you don't catch my meaning: he is the son of my father.

Mrs. Free. What does he say?

Char. The son of his father! My ears are ringing.

Mrs. B. (*after a pause of surprize.*) In sober earnest truth? (*clasping her hands together.*) O thank heaven for it! (*holding out her hand to* Free.) My friend and my brother.

Balt. (*to* Free.) Yes, she has always been your friend.

Free. (*kissing her hand with emotion.*) I know she has, and I have not been ungrateful. (*pre-*

senting Mrs. Free. *to Mrs.* B. *and* Balt.) And here is one who has not been so much your friend as she will be. Her too warm interest in a husband's success misled her into an error which she sincerely repents.

Mrs. Free. (*affectedly.*) Mrs. Baltimore has too much sensibility herself not to pardon the errors it occasions in others.

Mrs. B. (*taking her hand.*) Be assured, my dear madam, I can remember nothing with resentment that is connected with our present happiness.

Serv. (*aside to* Jenk.) And Mrs. Freeman is shaking hands with them too! O! there will be a stagnation to all activity! there will not be a lawsuit in the parish for a century to come!

Jenk. (*aside.*) Well, how could I help it? Walk this way for God's sake, or they will hear us.

(Jenk. *and* Ser. *retire to the bottom of the stage quarrelling.*)

Mrs. B. (*looking round.*) But there is something wanting for me still: My dear Charlotte—

Charl. (*coming forward and jumping into Mrs.* B.*'s arms.*) Yes, I was just waiting for this. O! I shall love you, and live with you, and hang about you continually! My sister, my aunty, my cousin! how many names may I call you?

Mrs. B. As many as you please. But there is another name that you must learn to say: (*leading her up to* Balt.) do you think you can look gravely in this gentleman's face and call him uncle? Nay, don't be frightened at him. (*to* Balt.) Poor girl, she has stood in awe of you intolerably.

Balt. (*embracing her.*) She shall stand in awe of me no more; and, if ever I look sternly upon her again, I will cheerfully submit to whatever correction she may think proper to inflict upon me. (*smiling significantly.*)

Char. (*holding out his hand to* Charlotte.) And is there no such thing as cousins to be made out of all this store of relationship.

Charl. O yes! there is a lazy, idle, good-for-nothing thing called a cousin, that we must all have some little kindness for, as in duty bound, notwithstanding.

Free. Don't mind her, my friend Charles: you shall be lazy and idle no longer. I'll find employment for you: I'll rouse you up and make a man of you. There is not a peer of the realm has it in his power to do more for his relations than I have. And by heaven I will do it too.

True. (*laying his hand on* Freeman's *shoulder.*) Gently now, my good Sir! we know all that perfectly well.

Balt. (*aside to* True.) O, let him boast now, he is entitled to it.

True. (*aside to* Balt. *giving a nod of satisfaction.*) Ay, all is well I see. (*aloud.*) Now, my happy friends, if I have been of any use amongst you, shew me your gratitude by spending the rest of the day at my house, with my good friend the Vicar of Blackmorton; who has many things to tell you.

Mrs. Free. (*aside to* True.) As I am the elder brother's wife, the foolish ceremony of my taking

precedence of Mrs. Baltimore will be settled accordingly; and I'm sure it will distress me extremely.

True. (*aside to her.*) Don't distress yourself, Madam; there is a bar to that, which you shall have the satisfaction of being acquainted with presently. Pray don't let your amiable delicacy distress you. (*Aloud.*) Now let us leave this happy nook. But I am resolved to have a little bower erected in this very spot, where we will all sometimes retire, whenever we find any bad dispositions stirring within us, with that book in our hands, which says, "If thy brother offend thee seven times in a day"—No, no, no! I must not repeat sacred words with an unlicensed tongue: but I will bless God in silence for restoring a rational creature to the kindly feelings of humanity. [EXEUNT.

END OF THE ELECTION.

ETHWALD:

A TRAGEDY,

IN FIVE ACTS.

PART FIRST.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

MEN:

OSWAL, *king of Mercia.*
EDWARD, *his nephew, and ethling or heir to the crown.*
SEAGURTH, *father to* Edward.
ETHWALD.
ETHELBERT, *a noble Thane.*
SELRED, *elder brother to* Ethwald.
MOLLO, *father to* Ethwald, *a Thane of small consideration.*
HEXULF, *a bigoted bishop.*
ALWY, *an artful adventurer.*
WOGGARWOLFE, *a rude marauding Thane.*
ONGAR, *a creature of* Alwy's.
Mystics and Mystic Sisters, supposed to be successors of the Druidical Diviners; Soldiers, Attendants, &c.

WOMEN:

ELBURGA, *daughter to king* Oswal.
BERTHA, *attached to* Ethwald.
SIGURTHA, *mother to* Bertha, *and niece to* Mollo, *living in his castle, with her daughter, as part of his family.*
DWINA, *attendant on* Elburga.
Ladies, Attendants, and female Druids.

The scene is supposed to be in England, *in the kingdom of Mercia, and the time near the end of the Heptarchy.*

ETHWALD.

ACT I.

SCENE I. *The court of a Saxon castle.* Ethwald *is discovered lying upon the ground as if half asleep. The sound of a horn is heard without, at which he raises his head a little, and lays it down again. The gate of the castle opens at the bottom of the stage, and enter* Selred, Ethelbert, *and Attendants, as if returning from hunting.* Sel. *and* Eth. *walk forward to the front, and the others retire by different sides of the stage.*

SELRED.

THIS morning's sport hath bravely paid our toil.
Have not my dogs done credit to their breed?
Eth. I grant they have.
Sel. Mark'd you that tawny hound,
With stretched nostrils snuffing to the ground,
Who still before, with animating yell,
Like the brave leader of a warlike band,
Thro' many a mazy track his comrades led
In the right tainted path?

I would not for the weirgelt of a Thane
That noble creature barter.

Eth. I do not mean to tempt thee with the sum.
See'st thou where Ethwald, like a cottage cur
On dunghill stretch'd, half sleeping half, awake,
Doth bask his lazy carcase in the sun?
Ho! lagger there!

(*To* Ethw. *who just raises his head and lays it down again.* Eth. *going up close to him.*)

When slowly from the plains and nether woods,
With all their winding streams and hamlets brown,
Updrawn, the morning vapour lifts its veil,
And thro' its fleecy folds, with soften'd rays,
Like a still'd infant smiling in his tears,
Looks thro' the early sun:—when from afar
The gleaming lake betrays its wide expanse,
And, lightly curling on the dewy air,
The cottage smoke doth wind its path to heaven:
When larks sing shrill, and village cocks do crow,
And lows the heifer loosen'd from her stall:
When heaven's soft breath plays on the woodman's brow,
And ev'ry hair-bell and wild tangled flower
Smells sweetly from its cage of checker'd dew:
Ay, and when huntsmen wind the merry horn,
And from its covert starts the fearful prey;
Who, warm'd with youth's blood in his swelling veins,
Would, like a lifeless clod, outstretched lie,
Shut up from all the fair creation offers?
(Eth. *yawns and heeds him not.*) He heeds me not.

Sel. I will assail him now. (*in a louder voice.*)
Ho! foxes heads our huntsman's belt adorn,
Who have thro' tangled woods and ferny moors,
With many wiles shaped out their mazy flight,
Have swam deep floods, and from the rocky brows
Of frightful precipices boldly leap'd
Into the gulph below.
Nay, e'en our lesser game hath nobly done:
Across his shoulders hang four furred feet,
That hath full twenty miles before us run
In little space. O, it was glorious!
Ethw. (*raising his head carelessly.*)
Well, well, I know that hares will swiftly run
When dogs pursue them. (*stretches himself and goes to rest again.*)
Eth. Leave him to rest, he is not to be rous'd.
Sel. Well, be it so. By heaven, my fretted soul
Did something of this easy stupor lack,
When near the easy limits of our chace
I pass'd the frowning tower of Ruthergeld?
He hangs a helmet o'er his battlements,
As tho' he were the chief protecting Thane
Of all the country round.
I'll teach th'ennobled Coerl, within these bounds,
None may pretend in noble birth to vie
With Mollo's honour'd line!
Eth. (*proudly.*) Hast thou forgot?
Or did'st thou never hear whose blood it is
That fills these swelling veins?
Sel. I cry you mercy, Thane: I little doubt
Some brave man was the founder of your house.

Eth. Yes, such an one, at mention of whose name
The brave descendants of two hundred years
Have stately rose with more majestic step,
And proudly smiled.

Ed. Who was this lordly chieftain?

Eth. A Swabian shepherd's son, who, in dark times,
When ruin dire menaced his native land,
With all his native lordship in his grasp,
A simple maple spear and osier shield,
Making of keen and deep sagacity,
With daring courage and exalted thoughts,
A plain and native warrant of command,
Around him gather'd all the valiant youth;
And, after many a gallant enterprise,
Repell'd the foe, and gave his country peace.
His grateful country bless'd him for the gift,
And offer'd to his worth the regal crown.

Sel. (*bowing respectfully.*) I yield me to thy claim.

(Ethwald, *who has raised himself up by degrees upon hearing the story, and listen'd eagerly, now starts up, impatient of the pause, and catches* Eth. *by the arm.*)

Ethw. And did they crown him then?

Eth. No; with a mind above all selfish wrong,
He gen'rously the splendid gift refused:
And drawing from his distant low retreat
The only remnant of the royal race,
Did fix him firmly on his father's seat;
Proving until his very latest breath
A true and loyal subject.

(Ethwald's *countenance changes, then turning from* Eth. *he slowly retires to the bottom of the stage and exit.* Eth. *follows him attentively with his eye as he retires.*)

Eth. Mark'd you the changes of the stripling's eye?
You do complain that he of late has grown
A musing sluggard. Selred, mark me well:
Brooding in secret, grows within his breast
That which no kindred owns to sloth or ease.
And is your father fix'd to keep him pent
Still here at home? Doth the old wizard's prophecy,
That the destruction of his noble line
Should from the valour of his youngest son,
In royal warfare, spring, still haunt his mind?
This close confinement makes the pining youth
More eager to be free.

Sel. Nay, rather say, the lore he had from thee
Hath o'er him cast this sullen gloom. Ere this,
Where was the fiercest courser of our stalls
That did not shortly under him become
As gentle as the lamb? What bow so stiff
But he would urge and strain his youthful strength,
Till every sinew o'er his body rose,
Like to the sooty forger's swelling arm,
Until it bent to him? What flood so deep
That on its foaming waves he would not throw
His naked breast, and beat each curling surge,
Until he gain'd the far opposing shore?
But since he learnt from thee that letter'd art,
Which only sacred priests were meant to know,

See how it is, I pray! His father's house
Has unto him become a cheerless den.
His pleasant tales and sprightly playful talk,
Which still our social meals were wont to cheer,
Now visit us but like a hasty beam
Between the showery clouds. Nay, e'en the maid
My careful father destines for his bride,
That he may still retain him here at home,
Fair as she is, receives, when she appears,
His cold and cheerless smile.
Surely thy penanced pilgrimage to Rome,
And the displeasure of our holy saint,
Might well have taught thee that such sacred art
Was good for priests alone. Thou'st spoilt the youth.

Eth. I've spoilt the youth! What think'st thou then of me?

Sel. I'll not believe that thou at dead of night
Unto dark spirits say'st unholy rhymes;
Nor that the torch, on holy altars burnt,
Sinks into smoth'ring smoke at thy approach;
Not that foul fiends about thy castle yell,
What time the darken'd earth is rock'd with storms;
Tho' many do such frightful credence hold,
And sign themselves when thou dost cross their way.
I do not believe ———

Eth. By the bless'd light of heaven!—

Sel. I cannot think ———

Eth. By this well-proved sword!

Sel. Patience, good Thane! I meant to speak thy praise.

Eth. My praise, say'st thou?

Sel. Thy praise. I would have said,
"That he who in the field so oft hath fought,
So bravely fought, and still in the honour'd cause,
Should hold unhallow'd league with damned sprites,
I never will believe." Yet much I grieve
That thou with bold intrusive forwardness,
Hast enter'd into that which holy men
Hold sacred for themselves;
And that thou hast, with little prudence too,
Entrapp'd my brother with this wicked lore,
Altho' methinks thou didst not mean him harm.

Eth. I thank thee, Selred; listen now to me,
And thou shalt hear a plain and simple tale,
As true as it is artless.
These cunning priests full loudly blast my fame,
Because that I with diligence and cost,
Have got myself instructed how to read
Our sacred scriptures, which, they would maintain,
No eye profane may dare to violate.
If I am wrong, they have themselves to blame;
It was their hard extortions first impell'd me
To search that precious book, from which they draw
Their right, as they pretend, to lord it thus.
But what think'st thou, my Selred, read I there?
Of one sent down from heav'n in sov'reign pomp,
To give into the hands of leagued priests

All power to hold th' immortal soul of man
In everlasting thraldom? O far otherwise!
(*taking* Selred's *hand with great earnestness.*)
Of one who health restored unto the sick,
Who made the lame to walk, the blind to see,
Who fed the hungry, and who rais'd the dead,
Yet had no place wherein to lay his head.
Of one from ev'ry spot of tainting sin
Holy and pure; and yet so lenient,
That he with soft and unupbraiding love
Did woo the wand'ring sinner from his ways,
As doth the elder brother of a house
The erring stripling guide. Of one, my friend,
Wiser by far than all the sons of men,
Yet teaching ignorance in simple speech,
As thou would'st take an infant on thy lap
And lesson him with his own artless tale.
Of one so mighty
That he did say unto the raging sea
"Be thou at peace," and it obeyed its voice;
Yet bow'd himself unto the painful death
That we might live.—They say that I am proud—
O! had they like their gentle master been!
I would, with suppliant knee bent to the ground,
Have kiss'd their very feet.
But, had they been like him, they would have
pardon'd me
Ere yet my bending knee had touch'd the earth.
Sel. Forbear, nor tempt me with thy moving
words!
I'm a plain soldier, and unfit to judge
Of mysteries which but concern the learn'd.

Eth. I know thou art, nor do I mean to tempt thee.
But in thy younger brother I had mark'd
A searching mind of freer exercise,
Untrammell'd with the thoughts of other men:
And like to one, who, in a gloomy night,
Watching alone amidst a sleeping host,
Sees suddenly along the darken'd sky
Some beauteous meteor play, and with his hand
Wakens a kindred sleeper by his side
To see the glorious sight, e'en so did I.
With pains and cost I divers books procured,
Telling of wars, and arms, and famous men;
Thinking it would his young attention rouse;
Would combat best a learner's difficulty,
And pave the way at length for better things.
But here his seized soul has wrapp'd itself,
And from the means is heedless of the end.
If wrong I've done, I do repent me of it.
And now, good Selred, as thou'st seen me fight
Like a brave chief, and still in th' honour'd cause,
By that good token kindly think of me,
As of a man who long has suffered wrong
Rather than one deserving so to suffer.
Sel. I do, brave Ethelbert.
Eth. I thank thee, friend.
And now we'll go and wash us from this dust:
We are not fit at goodly boards to sit.
Is not your feast-hour near?
Sel. I think it is.

[EXEUNT.

SCENE II.

A small apartment in MOLLO's *castle. Enter* ETHWALD *very thoughtful, who leans against a pillar for some time without speaking.*

Ethw. (*coming forward.*) Is it delusion this?
Or wears the mind of man within itself
A conscious feeling of its destination?
What say these suddenly imposed thoughts,
Which mark such deepen'd traces on the brain
Of vivid real persuasion, as do make
My nerved foot tread firmer on the earth,
And my dilating form tower on its way?
That I am born, within these narrow walls,
The younger brother of a petty chief,
To live my term in dark obscurity,
Until some foul disease or bloody gash,
In low marauding strife, shall lay me low?
My spirit sickens at the hateful thought!
It hangs upon it with such thick oppression,
As doth the heavy, dense, sulphureous air
Upon the breath it stifles. (*Pulling up the sleeve of his garment, and baring his right arm from the shoulder.*)
A firmer strung, a stronger arm than this
Own'd ever valiant chief of ancient story?
And lacks my soul within, what should impel it?
Ah! but occasion, like th' unveiling moon
Which calls the advent'rer forth, did shine on them!
I sit i'the shade! no star-beam falls on me!

(*Bursts into tears, and throws himself back against the pillar. A pause; he then starts forward full of animation, and tosses his arms high as he speaks.*)

No; storms are hush'd within their silent cave,
And unflesh'd lions slumber in the den,
But there doth come a time!

Enter BERTHA, *stealing softly upon him before he is aware.*

What, Bertha, is it thee who steal'st upon me?

Ber. I heard thee loud:
Conversest thou with spirits in the air?

Ethw. With those whose answ'ring voice thou can'st not hear.

Ber. Thou hast of late the friend of such become,
And only *they*. Thou art indeed so strange
Thy very dogs have ceas'd to follow thee,
For thou no more their fawning court receiv'st,
Nor callest to them with a master's voice.
What art thou grown, since thou hast lov'd to pore
Upon those magic books?

Ethw. No matter what! a hermit an' thou wilt.

Ber. Nay, rather, by thy high assumed gait
And lofty mien, which I have mark'd of late,
Oft times thou art, within thy mind's own world,
Some king or mighty chief.
If so it be, tell me thine honour's pitch,
And I will tuck my regal mantle on,
And mate thy dignity. (*assuming much state.*)

Ethw. Out on thy foolery!

Ber. Dost thou remember
How on our throne of turf, with birchen crowns
And willow branches waving in our hands,
We shook our careless feet, and caroll'd out,
And call'd ourselves the king and queen of Kent?

Ethw. Yes, children ever in their mimick play
Such fairy state assume.

Ber. And bearded men
Do sometimes gild the dull enchanting face
Of sombre stilly life with like conceits.
Come, an' you will we'll go to play again.
(*tripping gaily round him.*)

Ethw. Who sent thee here to gambol round me thus?

Ber. Nay, fie upon thee! for thou know'st right well
It is an errand of my own good will.
Knowest thou not the wand'ring clown is here,
Who doth the osier wands and rushes weave
Into all shapes: who chants gay stories too;
And who was wont to tell thee, when a boy,
Of all the bloody wars of furious Penda?
E'en now he is at work before the gate,
With heaps of pliant rushes round him strew'd;
In which birds, dogs, and children roll and nestle,
Whilst, crouching by his side, with watchful eye
The playful kitten marks each trembling rush
As he entwists his many circling bands.
Nay, men and matrons, too, around him flock,
And Ethelbert, low seated on a stone,

With arms thus cross'd, o'erlooks his curious craft.
Wilt thou not come?
Ethw. Away, I care not for it!
Ber. Nay, do not shake thy head, for thou must come.
This magic girdle will compel thy steps. (*throws a girdle round him playfully, and pulls it till it breaks.*)
Ethw. (*smiling coldly.*) Thou see'st it cannot hold me. (Bertha's *face changes immediately: she bursts into tears, and turns away to conceal it.*)
Ethw. (*soothing her.*) My gentle Bertha! little foolish maid!
Why fall those tears? wilt thou not look on me?
Dost thou not know I am a wayward man,
Sullen by fits, but meaning no unkindness?
Ber. O thou were wont to make the hall rejoice;
And cheer the gloomy face of dark December!
Ethw. And will, perhaps, again. Cheer up, my love! (*assuming a cheerful voice.*)
And plies the wand'ring clown his pleasing craft,
Whilst dogs and men and children round him flock?
Come, let us join them too. (*holding out his hand to her, whilst she smiles thro' her tears.*)
How course those glancing drops adown thy cheeks,
Like to a whimp'ring child! fie on thee, Bertha! (*wipes off her tears, and leads her out affectionately.*) [EXEUNT.

SCENE III.

A narrow stone gallery or passage.

(*Voice without.*) Haste, lazy comrade, there!

Enter two Servants *by opposite sides, one of them carrying mats of rushes in his arms.*

First Serv. Set'st thou thy feet thus softly to the ground,—
As if thou had'st been paid to count thy steps?
What made thee stay so long?

Second Serv. Heard you the news?

First Serv. The news?

Second Serv. Ay, by the mass! sharp news indeed.
And mark me well; beforehand I have said it;
Some of those spears now hanging in the hall
Will wag i' the field ere long.

First Serv. Thou hast a marv'llous gift of prophecy.
I know it well; but let us hear thy news.

Second Serv. Marry! the Britons and their restless prince,
Join'd with West Anglia's king, a goodly host,
Are now in Mercia, threat'ning all with ruin.
And over and besides, God save us all!
They are but five leagues off.
'Tis true. And over and besides again,
Our king is on his way to give them battle.
Ay, and moreover all, if the late floods
Have broken down the bridge, as it is fear'd,
He must perforce pass by our castle walls,

And then thou shalt behold a goodly shew!
First Serv. Who brought the tidings?
Second Serv. A soldier sent on horseback all express:
E'en now I heard him tell it to the Thane,
Who cautioned me to tell it unto none,
That Ethwald might not hear it.
First Serv. And thou in sooth obey'st his caution well.
Now hear thou this from me: thou art a lout;
And over and besides a babbling fool;
Ay, and moreover all, I'll break thy head
If thou dost tell again, in any wise,
The smallest tittle of it.
Second Serv. Marry! I can be as secret as thyself!
I tell not those who blab.
First Serv. Yes, yes, thy caution is most scrupulous;
Thou'lt whisper it in Ethwald's hither ear
And bid the farther not to know of it.
Give me those trusses.
Second Serv. Yes, this is made for my old master's seat,
And this, so soft, for gentle lady Bertha. (*giving the mats.*)
And this, and this, and this for Ethelbert.
But see thou put a sprig of mountain-ash
Beneath it snugly. Dost thou understand?
First Serv. What is thy meaning?
Second Serv. It hath a power to cross all wicked spells;

So that a man may sit next stool to th' devil,
If he can lay but slyly such a twig
Beneath his seat, nor suffer any harm.
First Serv. I wish there were some herb of secret power
To save from daily skaith of blund'ring fools:
I know beneath whose stool it should be press'd.
Get thee along! the feast smokes in the hall.
[EXEUNT.

SCENE IV.

A Saxon hall, with the walls hung round with armour. MOLLO, ETHELBERT, SELRED, ETHWALD, BERTHA, SIGURTHA, *and others, are discovered sitting round a table, on which stand goblets and flaggons, &c. after a feast.*

Eth. Nay, gentle Bertha, if thou followest him,
Sheer off those lovely tresses from thy head,
And with a frowning helmet shade those eyes:
E'en with thy prowess added to his own,
Methinks he will not be surcharg'd of means
To earn his brilliant fortune in the field.
Ber. Nay, rather will I fill a little scrip
With sick-men's drugs and salves for fest'ring wounds,
And journey by his side, a trav'lling leech.
Sel. That will, indeed, no unmeet comrade be
For one whose fortune must be earn'd with blows
Borne by no substitutes.
Ethw. Well jested, Thanes!
But some, ere now, with fortune earn'd by blows

Borne by no substitutes, have placed their mates
Above the gorgeous dames of castled lords.
Cheer up, sweet Bertha!
For ev'ry drug ta'en from thy little scrip
I'll pay thee back with ——
Eth. Sticks the word i' his throat.
Sel. It is too great for utt'rance.
Eth. Here's to your growing honours, future chief;
And here is to the lofty dame who shall be —
(*they all drink ironically to* Ethw. *and* Berth.)
Mollo. (*seriously.*) Here is a father's wish for thee, my son, (*to* Ethw.)
Better than all the glare of fleeting greatness.
Be thou at home the firm domestic prop
Of thine old father's house, in this as honour'd
As he who bears far hence advent'rous arms!
Nor think thee thus debarred from warlike deeds:
Our neighb'ring chiefs are not too peaceable,
And much adventure breed in little space.
Ethw. What! shall I in their low destructive strife
Put forth my strength, and earn with valiant deeds
The fair renown of mighty Woggarwolfe,
The flower of all those heroes? Hateful ruffian!
He drinks men's blood and human flesh devours!
For scarce a heifer on his pasture feeds
Which hath not cost a gallant warrior's life.
I cry you mercy, father! you are kind,

But I do lack the grace to thank you for it.
(Mollo *leans on the table and looks sad.*)
Sigur. (*to* Mol.) Good uncle, you are sad! Our gen'rous Ethwald
Contemns not his domestic station here,
Tho' little willing to enrich your walls
With spoils of petty war.
Ethw. (*seeing his father sad, and assuming cheerfulness.*)
Nay, father, if your heart is set on spoil,
Let it be Woggarwolfe's that you shall covet,
And small persuasion may suffice to tempt me.
To plunder him will be no common gain.
We feasters love the flesh of well-run game:
And, faith! the meanest beeve of all his herds
Has hoof'd it o'er as many weary miles,
With goading pike-men hollowing at his heels,
As e'er the bravest antler of the woods.
His very muttons, too, are noble beasts,
For which contending warriors have fought;
And thrifty dames will find their fleece enrich'd
With the productions of full many a soil.
Ber. How so, my Ethwald?
Ethw. Countest thou for nought
Furze from the upland moors, and bearded down,
Torn from the thistles of the sandy plain?
The sharp-tooth'd bramble of the shaggy woods
And tufted seeds from the dark marsh? Good sooth;
She well may triumph in no vulgar skill

Who spins a coat from it.
And then his wardrobe, too, of costly geer,
Which from the wallets of a hundred thieves,
Has been transferring for a score of years,
In endlesss change, it will be noble spoil!
(*A trumpet is heard without, and* Ethw. *starts from his seat.*)
Ha! 'tis the trumpet's voice!
What royal leader this way shapes his route?
(*a silent pause.*)
Ye answer not, and yet ye seem to know.

Enter Servants *in haste.*

Good fellows, what say ye?
First Serv. The king! the king! and with five thousand men!
Second Serv. I saw his banners from the battlements
Waving between the woods.
Third Serv. And so did I.
His spearmen onward move in dusky lines,
Like the brown reeds that skirt the winter pool.
Sel. Well, well, their needs not all this wond'ring din:
He passes on, and we shall do our part.
First Serv. The foe is three leagues off.
Sel. Hold thy fool's tongue! I want no information.
(*Ethwald remains for a while thoughtful, then running eagerly to the end of the hall, climbs up and snatches from the walls a sword and shield, with which he is about to run out.*)

Mollo. (*tottering from his seat.*)
O go not forth my rash impetuous son!
Stay yet a term beneath thy father's roof,
And, were it at the cost of half my lands,
I'll send thee out accoutred like a thane.

Ethw. No, reverend sire, these be my patrimony! I ask of thee no more.

Ber. And wilt thou leave us?

Mollo. Ay, he'll break thy heart,
And lay me in the dust! (*trumpet sounds again, and* Ethw. *turning hastily from them, runs out.*)

Ber. Oh! he is gone for ever!

Eth. Patience, sweet Bertha!

Sel. The castle gates are shut by my command,
He cannot now escape. Holla, good friends!
(*to those without.*)

Enter Followers.

All quickly arm yourselves, and be prepared
To follow me before the fall of eve.

Eth. Send out my scout to climb the farther hill,
And spy if that my bands are yet in sight.
[EXEUNT Followers.
Now let us try to tame this lion's whelp.

Enter Servant *in haste.*

Sel. What tidings man? Is Ethwald at the gate?

Ser. No, good my lord, nor yet within the walls.

Sel. What, have they open'd to him?

Ser. No, my Lord,
Loudly he call'd, but when it was refus'd,

With glaring eyes, like an enchafed wolf,
He hied him where the lowest southern wall
Rises but little o'er the rugged rock;
There, aided by a half-projecting stone,
He scal'd its height, and holding o'er his head,
His sword and shield, grasp'd in his better hand,
Swam the full moat.

Eth. (*to* Sel.) O, noble youth!
Did I not say, you might as well arrest
The fire of Heav'n within its pitchy cloud
As keep him here? (Bertha *faints away.*)
Alas, poor maid!

(*Whilst* Sigurtha *and* Eth. &c. *attend to* Bertha, *enter followers and retainers, and begin to take down the armour from the walls.* *Enter* WOGGARWOLFE.)

Wog. (*to* Sel.) They would have shut your gate upon me now,
But I, commission'd on the king's affairs,
Commanded entrance. Oswal greets you, chiefs,
And gives you orders, with your followers,
To join him speedily. (*seeing* Bertha.)
What, swooning women here?

Sel. Ethwald is gone in spite of all our care,
And she, thou know'st, my father's niece's child,
Brought up with him from early infancy,
Is therein much affected.

Wog. (*smiling.*) O, it is ever thus, I know it well,
When striplings are concern'd! Once on a time,
A youthful chief I seiz'd in his own hall,
When, on the instant, was the floor around

With fainting maids and shrieking matrons strew'd,
As tho' the end of all things had been link'd
Unto my fatal grasp.

Sel. (*eagerly.*) Thou did'st not slay him?

Wog. (*smiling contemptuously.*) Ask Selred if I slew mine enemy?

Sel. Then, by heav'n's light, it was a ruffian's deed!

Wog. I cry thee grace! wear'st thou a virgin sword?
Maidens turn pale when they do look on blood,
And men there be who sicken at the sight,
If men they may be call'd.

Sel. Ay, men there be,
Who sicken at the sight of crimson butchery,
Yet in the battle's heat will far out-dare
A thousand shedders of unkindled blood.

Eth. (*coming forward.*) Peace, Thanes! this is no time for angry words.

(Bertha *giving a deep sigh,* Eth. *and* Sel. *go to her and leave* Wog. *who heeds her not, but looks at the men taking the arms from the walls.—Observing one who hesitates between the swords.*)

Wog. Fool, choose the other blade!
That weight of steel will noble gashes make!
Nay, rightly guided in a hand like thine,
Might cleave a man down to the nether ribs.

Sig. (*to* Bertha, *as she is recovering.*)
My gentle child, how art thou?

Ber. And no kind hand to hold him!

Eth. Be not cast down, sweet maid; he'll soon return;
All are not lost who join in chanceful war.
Ber. I know right well, good Thane, all are not lost.
The native children of rude jarring war,
Full oft returning from the field, become
Beneath their shading helmets aged men:
But, ah! the kind, the playful, and the gay;
They who have gladden'd their domestic board,
And cheer'd the winter-fire, do they return?
(*shaking her head sorrowfully.*)
I grieve you all: I will no more complain.
Dear mother, lead me hence. (*to* Sig.)
(*To* Sel.) I thank you, gentle Selred, this suffices.
[EXEUNT Bertha, *supported by* Sigurtha.
Sel. (*to* Mollo, *who has sat for some time with his face cover'd.*) What, so o'ercome, my father?
Moll. I am o'ercome, my son; lend me thine arm.
[EXEUNT.

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

ACT II.

SCENE I. *A forest: the view of an abbey with its spires in the back ground. Enter the* King, *attended by* SEAGURTH *and several* Thanes *and followers, some of them wounded, and their wounds bound up, as after a battle. A flourish of trumpets: the* King *stretches out his arm in the action of command; the trumpets cease, and they all halt.*

King. Companions of this rough and bloody day,
Beneath the kindly shelter of this wood
A while repose, until our eager youth,
Shall, from the widely spread pursuit returned,
Rejoin our standards.
Brave Seneschal, thou'rt weak with loss of blood;
Forbear attendance. Ay, and thou, good Baldrick:
And thou, (*to another,*) and all of you.
Sen. No, gracious king;
The sight of you, unhurt, doth make the blood
That in our veins remains so kindly glow,
We cannot faint.
King. Thanks, noble chiefs! dear is the gain I earn,
Purchased with blood so precious. Who are those

Who thitherward in long procession move?
Sen. It is the pious brethren, as I guess,
Come forth to meet you from yon neighb'ring abbey,
And at their head the holy Hexulf comes.

Enter HEXULF *and* Monks.

Hex. Accept our humble greetings, royal sire!
Victorious be your arms! and in the dust
Low be your foes, as in this glorious day!
Favour'd of heav'n, and of St. Alban, hail!
King. I thank your kindly zeal, my rev'rend father;
And from these holy brethren do accept
With thanks this token of good will, not doubting
That much I am beholden to your prayers.
Hex. In truth, most gracious king, your armed host
Has not more surely in your cause prevail'd
Than hath our joint petition, offer'd up
With holy fervour, most importunate.
Soon as the heav'n-rais'd voices sweetly reach'd
The echoing arches of yon sacred roofs,
Saint Alban heard, and to your favour'd side
Courage and strength, the soul of battle, sent;
Fear and distraction to th' opposing foe.
King. Ah, then, good father, and ye pious monks!
Would that ye had begun your prayers the sooner!
For long in doubtful scales the battle hung;
And of the men who, with this morning's sun,
Buckled their harness on to follow me,

Full many a valiant warriour, on his back
Lies stiff'ning to the wind.

Hex. The wicked sprite in ev'ry armed host
Will find his friends ; who doubtless for a time
May counterpoise the prayers of holy men.
There are among your troops, I question not,
Many who do our sacred rites contemn :
Many who have blasphem'd — Ay, good my Lord ;
And many holding baleful heresies.
Fought Ethelbert, of Sexford, in your host ?

King. He did, my rev'rend father, bravely fought :
To him and valiant Selred, Mollo's son,
Belong the second honours of the day.

(Hexulf *looks abash'd and is silent.*)

Enter EDWARD *attended, who, after making his obeisance to the* King, *runs up eagerly to* Seagurth.

Edw. You are not wounded, father ?

Sea. No, my boy.

Edw. Thanks to preserving goodness ! Noble Thanes,
It grieves me much to see those swathed limbs.
War wears a horrid, yet alluring face.
(*To* King.) Your friends, my Lord, have done me great despite.
Had they not long detain'd me on the way,
I should have been with you before the battle.

King. Complain not, youth ; they had, in this, commands
Too high to be disputed. And 'tis well,
For we have had a rough and bloody day.

Edw. Ha! is it so? But you have been victorious.
How went the field?

Sea. Loud rose our battle's sound, and for a while
The Mercians bravely fought; when all at once,
From some unlook'd-for cause, as yet unknown,
A powerful panic seiz'd our better wing,
Which, back recoiling, turn'd and basely fled.
Touch'd quickly with a seeming sympathy,
Our centre-force began, in laxed strength,
To yield contended space. — So stood the field;
When on a sudden, like those warriour spirits,
Whose scatter'd locks the streamy light'ning is,
Whose spear the bolt of heaven; such as the seer
In 'tranced gaze beholds midst hurtling storms,
Rush'd forth a youth unknown, and in a pass,
Narrow and steep, took his determin'd stand.
His beck'ning hand and loud commanding voice
Constrain'd our flying soldiers from behind,
And the sharp point of his opposing spear
Met the pale rout before.
The dark returning battle thicken'd round him.
Deeds of amazement wrought his mighty arm;
Rapid, resistless, terrible.
High rose each warlike bosom at the sight,
And Mercia, like a broad encreasing wave,
Up swell'd into a hugely billow'd height,
O'erwhelming in its might all lesser things,
Upon the foe return'd. Selred and Ethelbert
Fell on their weaken'd flank. Confusion, then,

And rout and horrid slaughter fill'd the field:
Wide spread the keen pursuit; the day is ours;
Yet many a noble Mercian strews the plain.
Edw. (*eagerly.*) But the young hero fell not?
Sea. No, my son.
Edw. Then bless'd be heav'n! there beats no noble heart
Which shall not henceforth love him as a brother.
Would he were come unhurt from the pursuit!
O that I had beheld him in his might,
When the dark battle turn'd!
Sea. Your wish is soon fulfill'd, my eager boy;
For here, in truth, the youthful warriour comes,
And, captive by his side, the British Prince.

Enter ETHWALD *with the* British Prince *prisoner, accompanied by* SELRED and ETHELBERT, *and presents his prisoner to the* King.

King. (*to* Prince.) Prince of the Britons, clear thy cloudy brow;
The varied fate of war the bravest prove.
And tho' I might complain that thy aggressions
Have burnt my towns, and filled my land with blood,
Thy state forbids it. Here, good Seneschal,
Receive your charge, and let him know no change
Unsuited to a prince. (*To* Ethwald.)
And thou, brave warriour, whose youthful arm
Has brought unto thy king so high a gift,
Say, what proud man may lift his honour'd head,
And boast he is thy father.

Ethw. A Thane, my Lord, forgotten and retired;
I am the youngest son of aged Mollo,
And Ethwald is my name.

King. Youngest in years, tho' not in honour, youth,
E'en tho' the valiant Selred is thy brother. (*turning to* Selred.)
And now be thou the first and noble root,
From which a noble race shall take its growth,
Wearing thy honours proudly!
Of Marnieth's earldom be thou the Lord!
For well I know the council of the states
Will not refuse to ratify my grant.
And thou, brave Ethelbert, and Selred, too,
Ye well have earn'd a noble recompense,
And shall not be forgot. Come hither, Edward;
Take thou this hero's hand; and, noble Ethwald,
Thus let the kingdom's ethling join with me
In honouring thy worth.

(Edward, *who has gazed at some distance upon* Ethwald, *springing forward eagerly.*)
Give him my hand, my Lord! have you not said
That I should fold him to my burning heart?
(*Embraces* Ethw.) Most valiant, Ethwald,
Fain would I speak the thoughts I bear to thee,
But they do choke and flutter in my throat,
And make me like a child. (*passing his hand across his eyes.*)

Ethw. (*kissing* Edward's *hand.*) I am repaid beyond a kingdom's worth.

Edw. (*to* Sea. *bounding joyfully.*) Father, have you embraced him?

Ethwald, my father is a valiant man. (Sea. *embraces* Ethw. *but not so eagerly as* Edw.)

King. (*to* Ethw.) Brave youth, with you, and with your noble friends,
I shall, ere long, have further conference. (*retires to the bottom of the stage with* Hexulf.)

(Edward, *after gazing with admiration upon* Ethw. *puts his hand upon his head, as if to measure his height; then upon both his shoulders, as if he were considering the breadth of his chest; then steps some paces back and gazes at him again.*)

Edw. How tall and strong thou art? broad is thy chest:
Stretch forth, I pray, that arm of mighty deeds.

(Ethw. *smiles and stretches out his arm;* Edw. *looks at it, and then at his own.*)

Would I were nerv'd like thee!
(*Taking* Ethw.*'s sword.*) It is of weight to suit no vulgar arm.
(*Returning it.*) There, hero; graceful is the sword of war
In its bold master's grasp.

Ethw. Nay, good my Lord, if you will honour me,
It does too well your noble hand become
To be return'd to mine.

Edw. Ha! say'st thou so? Yes, I will keep thy pledge.
Perhaps my arm — Ah, no! it will not be!
But what returning token can I give?

I have bright spears and shields, and shining blades,
But nought ennobled by the owner's use.
(*Takes a bracelet from his arm and fastens it round* Ethwald's.)
King. (*advancing from the bottom of the stage.*)
My worthy chiefs and Thanes, the night wears on,
The rev'rend bishop, and these pious men,
Beneath their fane give hospitality,
And woo us to accept it for the night.
Sea. I thought, my Lord, you meant to pass the night
With your brave soldiers in the open field:
Already they have learnt the pleasing tale.
Shall I unsay it?
King. Nay, that were unfit.
I pray you pardon me, my rev'rend father!
I cannot house with you, it were unfit.
Hex. Should not your greatness spend the night with those,
To whom, in truth, you owe the victory?
We chant at midnight to St. Alban's praise:
Surely my Lord regards those sacred things.
(*Whispers the* King.)
King. Brave Seagurth, there are reasons of good weight
Why I should lay aside my first intent.
Let all these wounded chieftains follow me:
The rest who list may keep the open field.
(*To* Edw.) Nephew, thou must not prove a soldier's hardships,
Ere thou hast earn'd a soldier's name. Nay, nay,
It must be so. (EXEUNT King, *wounded* Chiefs,

Hexulf, *and* Monks, *followed by* Edward *very unwillingly.*)

Sea. Who loves a soldier's pillow, follow me.

[EXEUNT.

SCENE II.

The outside of MOLLO's *castle.* BERTHA, SIGURTHA, *and others discovered on the walls, and several* Servants *and* Retainers *standing by the gate below.*

Berth. O, will they ne'er appear? I'll look no more;
Mine eager gazing but retards their coming.
(*Retires and immediately returns again.*)
Holla, good Murdoch! (*to a* Servant *below.*)
Thou put'st thy hand above thy sunned eyes:
Dost thou descry them?

First Ser. Mercy, gentle lady,
If you descry them not from that high perch,
How should I from my level station here?

Sig. (*to* Berth.) Go in, my child, thou art worn out with watching.

(Berth. *retires, and* 2d Servant *goes at some distance from the walls and looks out another way.*)

Sec. Ser. Here comes the noble Selred.
(*All call out.*) Noble Selred!

Berth. (*returning upon the wall.*) What, Ethwald, say ye?

Sig. No, it is Selred.

Enter SELRED, *with followers, and looks up to the walls, where* Sigurtha *waves her hand.*

Sig. Welcome, brave Selred! welcome all thy band!
How far are they behind for whom we watch?

Sel. Two little miles or less. Methinks ere this
Their van should be in sight.
My messenger inform'd you?

Sig. Oh, he did!

Sel. Where is my father?

Sig. He rests within, spent with a fearful joy,
And silent tears steal down his furrow'd cheeks.

Sel. I must confer with him. The king intends
To stop and do him honour on his march,
But enters not our walls.

[EXEUNT *into the castle.*

SCENE III.

A chamber in the castle. Enter SIGURTHA *and* BERTHA, *speaking as they enter.*

Berth. Nay, mother, say not so: was he not wont,
If but returning from the daily chace,
To send an upward glance unto that tower?
There well he knew, or late or cold the hour,
His eye should find me.

Sig. My gentle Bertha, be not thus disturb'd.
Such busy scenes, such new unlook'd-for things
Ruffle the flowing stream of habit; men
Will then forgetful seem, tho' not unkind.

Berth. Think'st thou? (*shaking her head.*)
I saw him by his sovereign stand,

And O, how graceful! every eye to him
Was turn'd, and every face smil'd honours on him;
Yet his proud station quickly did he leave
To greet his humbler friends who stood aloof.
The meanest follower of these walls, already,
Some mark of kind acknowledgment hath had—
He look'd not up—I am alone forgotten!

Sig. Be patient, child: he will not long delay
To seek thee in thy modest privacy;
Approving more to see thee here retired
Than, boldly to the army's eye exposed,
Greeting his first approach. I, the mean while,
Intrusted am with orders from the Thane,
Which must not be neglected. [EXIT.

Berth. (*after walking up and down, agitated, and frequently stopping to listen.*)
Ah, no! deceiv'd again! I need not listen!
No bounding steps approach.

(*She sits down despondingly. Enter* ETHWALD *behind, and steals softly up to her.*)

Ethw. Bertha!

Berth. (*starting up.*) My Ethwald! (*he holds out his arms to her joyfully, and she bursts into tears.*)

Ethw. Thou dost not grieve that I am safe return'd?

Berth. O no! I do not grieve, yet I must weep.
Hast thou, in truth, been kind? I will not chide:
I cannot do it now.

Ethw. O, fie upon thee! like a wayward child
To look upon me thus! cheer up, my love.

(*He smiles upon her joyfully, and her countenance brightens. She then puts her hand upon his arm, and, stepping back a little space, surveys him with delight.*)

Berth. Thou man of mighty deeds!
Thou, whom the brave shall love and princes honour!
Dost thou, in truth, return to me again,
Mine own, my very Ethwald?

Ethw. No, that were paltry: I return to thee
A thousand fold the lover thou hast known me.
I have, of late, been careless of thee, Bertha.
The hopeless calm of dull obscurity,
Like the thick vapours of a stagnant pool,
Oppress'd my heart and smother'd kind affections;
But now th' enlivening breeze of fortune wakes
My torpid soul — When did I ever fold thee
To such a warm and bounding heart as this?
(*Embraces her.*)
The king has given me Mairnieth's earldom —
Nay, smile my Bertha!

Berth. So I do, my Ethwald.

Ethw. The noble Ethling greatly honours me
With precious tokens: nay, the very soldiers
Do cock their pointed weapons as I pass;
As tho' it were to say, "there goes the man
That we would cheerly follow."
Unto what end these fair beginnings point
I know not—but of this I am assured,
There is a course of honour lies before me,

Be it with dangers, toil, or pain beset,
Which I will boldly tread. Smiles not my love?
Berth. I should, in truth: but how is this? methinks
Thou ever look'st upon the things to come,
I on the past. A great and honour'd man
I know thou'lt be: but O, bethink thee, then!
How once thou wert, within these happy walls,
A little cheerful boy, with curly pate,
Who led the infant Bertha by the hand,
Storing her lap with ev'ry gaudy flower;
With speckled eggs stol'n from the hedgeling's nest,
And berries from the tree: ay, think on this,
And then I know thou'lt love me!
(*Trumpet sounds. Catching hold of him eagerly.*)
Hear'st thou that sound? The blessed saints preserve thee!
Must thou depart so soon?
Ethw. Yes, of necessity: reasons of weight
Constrain the king, and I, new in his service,
Must seem to follow him with willing steps.
But go thou with me to the castle gate.
We will not part until the latest moment.
Berth. Yet stop, I pray, thou must receive my pledge.
See'st thou this woven band of many dyes,
Like to a mottled snake? its shiny woof
Was whiten'd in the pearly dew of eve,
Beneath the silver moon: its varied warp
Was dyed with potent herbs, at midnight cull'd.

It hath a wond'rous charm: the breast that wears it
No change of soft affection ever knows.
Ethw. (*receiving it with a smile.*) I'll wear it,
Bertha. (*Trumpet sounds.*)
Hark! it calls me hence.
Berth. O go not yet! here is another gift,
This ring enrich'd with stone of basilisk,
Whenever press'd by the kind wearer's hand,
Presents the giver's image to his mind.
Wilt thou not wear it?
Ethw. (*receiving it.*) Yes, and press it too.
Berth. And in this purse—(*taking out a purse.*)
Ethw. What! still another charm? (*laughing.*)
Thou simple maid!
Dost thou believe that witched geer like this
Hath power a lover faithful to retain,
More than thy gentle self?
Berth. Nay, laugh, but wear them.
Eth. I will, my love, since thou wilt have it so.
(*Putting them in his breast.*) Here are they lodged,
and cursed be the hand
That plucks them forth! And now receive my pledge.
It is a jewel of no vulgar worth: (*ties it on her arm.*)
Wear it and think of me. But yet, belike,
It must be steep'd into some wizard's pot,
Or have some mystic rhyming muttered o'er it,
Ere it will serve the turn.
Berth. (*pressing the jewel on her arm.*)
O no! right well I feel there is no need.

Ethw. Come, let us go: we do not part thou know'st,
But at the castle gate. Cheer up, my Bertha!
I'll soon return, and oft return again. [EXEUNT.

SCENE IV.

An apartment in a royal castle. Enter ETHWALD *and* ALWY, *speaking as they enter.*

Ethw. What peace! peace, say'st thou, with these glorious arms,
In conquest red, occasion bright'ning round us,
And smiling victory, with beck'ning hand,
Pointing to future fields of nobler strife,
With richer honours crown'd? What, on the face
Of such fair prospects draw the veil of peace!
Cold blasting peace! The blackest fiend of hell
Hath not a thought more dev'lish!
Alwy. It is indeed a flat unpleasant tale
For a young warrior's ear: but well hast thou
Improv'd the little term of bold occasion;
Short while thou wert but Mollo's younger son,
Now art thou Mairnieth's lord.
Ethw. And what is Mairnieth's lordship! I will own
That, to my distant view, such state appear'd
A point of fair and noble eminence;
But now—what is it now? O! it is sunk
Into a petty knoll! I am as one
Who doth attempt some lofty mountain's height,
And having gained what to the upcast eye
The summit's point appear'd, astonish'd sees

Its cloudy top, majestic and enlarged,
Towering aloft, as distant as before.
Alwy. Patience, brave Ethwald; ere thy locks are grey,
Thy helmed head shall yet in battle tower,
And fair occasion shape thee fair reward.
Ethw. Ere that my locks are grey! the world ere now
Hath crouch'd beneath a beardless youth. But I—
I am as one who mounts to th' azure sky
On the rude billow's back, soon sunk again:
Like the loud thunder of th' upbreaking cloud,
The terror of a moment. Fate perverse!
'Till now, war's frowning spirit wont, when rous'd,
To urge with whirling lash his sable steeds,
Nor slack his furious speed till the wide land
From bound to bound beneath his axle shook:
But soon as in my hand the virgin spear
Had flesh'd its ruddy point, then is he turn'd
Like a tired braggard to his caves of sloth.
(*stamping on the ground.*)
Peace! cursed peace! Who will again unchain
The grizly dog of war?
Alwy. Mean'st thou the British prince?
Ethw. (*eagerly.*) What say'st thou, Alwy?
Alwy. I said not aught.
Ethw. Nay, marry! but thou didst!
And it has rais'd a thought within my mind.
The British prince releas'd, would he not prove
A dog of war, whose yell would soon be follow'd?

Alwy. They do indeed full hard advantage take
Of his captivity, and put upon him
Conditions suited to his hapless state,
More than his princely will.

Ethw. 'Tis basely done: would that some friendly hand
His prison would unbar and free the thrall!
But no, no, no! I to the king resign'd him;
'Twere an unworthy deed.

Alwy. It were most difficult;
For now they keep him in a closer hold,
And bind his hands with iron.

Ethw. Have they done this? I'm glad on't! O I'm glad on't!
They promised nought unworthy of a prince
To put upon him — Now my hands are free!
And, were it made of living adamant,
I will unbar his door. Difficult, say'st thou!
No, this hath made it easy.

Alwy. Well softly then; we may devise a way
By which the Seneschal himself will seem
The secret culprit in this act.

Ethw. No, no!
I like it not; tho' I must work i' the dark,
I'll not in cunningly devised light
Put on my neighbour's cloak to work his ruin.
But let's to work apace! the storm shall rise!
My sound shall yet be heard!

Alwy. Fear not, thou shalt ere long be heard again,
A dark'ning storm which shall not soon be lay'd.

Ethw. Ah, thou hast touch'd where my life's life is cell'd!
Is there a voice of prophecy within thee?
(*catching hold of his arm eagerly.*)
I will believe there is! my stirring soul
Leapt at thy words. Such things ere now have been:
Men oft have spoke, unweeting of themselves;
Yea, the wild winds of night have utter'd words,
That have unto the list'ning ear of hope
His future greatness told, ere yet his thoughts
On any certain point had fix'd their hold.

Alwy. Thou may'st believe it: I myself, methinks,
Feel secret earnest of thy future fortune;
And please myself to think my friendly hand
May humbly serve, perhaps, to build thy greatness.

Ethw. Come to my heart, my friend! tho' new in friendship,
Thou, and thou only, bear'st true sympathy
With mine aspiring soul. I can with thee
Unbar my mind — Methinks thou shiv'rest, Alwy.

Alwy. 'Tis very cold.

Ethw. Is it? I feel it not:
But in my chamber burns the crackling oak,
There let us go.

Alwy. If you are so inclin'd.

(*As they are going*, Ethw. *stops short, and catches hold of* Alwy *eagerly.*)

Ethw. A sudden fancy strikes me: Woggarwolfe,
That restless ruffian, might with little art
Be rous'd on Wessex to commit aggression:
Its royal chief, now leaguing with our king,
Will take the field again.

Alwy. We might attempt him instantly: but move,
In faith I'm cold! [EXEUNT.

SCENE V.

A dark apartment in the same castle. WOGGARWOLFE *is discovered asleep upon a couch of rushes, and covered with a mat. Enter* ALWY *and a* Follower, *with a lad bearing a torch before them.* ALWY *signs with his hand, and the torchbearer retires to a distance.*

Alwy. Softly, ere we proceed; a sudden thought,
Now crossing o'er my mind, disturbs me much,
He who to-night commands the farther watch,
Canst thou depend upon him?

Fol. Most perfectly; and, free of hostile bounds,
The British prince ere this pursues his way.

Alwy. I'm satisfied: now to our present purpose.
(*As they advance towards the couch,* WOGGARWOLFE *is heard speaking in his sleep.*)
Ha! speaks he in his sleep? some dream disturbs him:
His quiv'ring limbs beneath the cov'ring move.
He speaks again.

Wog. (*in his sleep.*) Swift, in your package stow those dead men's geer,
And loose their noble coursers from the stall.
Alwy. Ay, plund'ring in his sleep.
Wog. Wipe thou that blade:
Those bloody throats have drench'd it to the hilt.
Alwy. O, hear the night-thoughts of that bloody hound!
I must awake him. Ho, brave Woggarwolfe!
Wog. Hear how those women scream! we'll still them shortly.
Alwy. Ho, Woggarwolfe!
Wog. Who calls me now? cannot you master it?
(Alwy *knocks upon the ground with his stick.*)
What, batt'ring on it still? Will it not yield?
Then fire the gate.
Alwy. (*shaking him.*) Ho, Woggarwolfe, I say!
Wog. (*starting up half awake.*) Is not the castle taken?
Alwy. Yes, it is taken.
Wog. (*rubbing his eyes.*) Pooh! it is but a dream.
Alwy. But dreams full oft are found of real events
The forms and shadows.
There is in very deed a castle taken,
In which your Wessex foes have left behind
Nor stuff, nor store, nor mark of living thing.
Bind on thy sword and call thy men to arms!
Thy boiling blood will bubble in thy veins,
When thou hast heard it is the tower of Boruth.

Wog. My place of strength ?
Fol. Yes, chief; I spoke with one new from the West,
Who saw the ruinous broil.
Wog. By the black fiends of hell! therein is stored
The chiefest of my wealth. Upon its walls
The armour of a hundred fallen chiefs
Did rattle to the wind.
Alwy. Now will it sound elsewhere.
Wog. (*in despair.*) My noble steeds, and all my stalled kine!
O, the fell hounds! no mark of living thing?
Fol. No mark of living thing.
Wog. Ah! and my little arrow-bearing boy!
He whom I spared amidst a slaughter'd heap,
Smiling all weetless of th' uplifted stroke
Hung o'er his harmless head!
Like a tamed cub I rear'd him at my feet:
He could tell biting jests, bold ditties sing,
And quaff his foaming bumper at the board,
With all the mock'ry of a little man.
By heav'n I'll leave alive within their walls,
Nor maid, nor youth, nor infant at the breast,
If they have slain that child! blood-thirsty ruffians!
Alwy. Ay, vengeance! vengeance! rouse thee like a man!
Occasion tempts; the foe, not yet return'd,
Have left their castle careless of defence.
Call all thy followers secretly to arms:
Set out upon the instant.

Wog. By holy saints, I will! reach me, I pray! (*pointing to his arms lying at a little distance from him.*)

Alwy. (*giving them.*) There, be thou speedy.

Wog. (*putting on his armour.*) Curse on those loosen'd springs, they will not catch!

Oh, all the goodly armour I have lost!
Light curses on my head! if I do leave them
Or spear, or shield, or robe, or household stuff,
Or steed within their stalls, or horn or hoof
Upon their grassy hills! (*looking about.*) What want I now?
Mine armour-man hath ta'en away my helm —
Faith, and my target too! hell blast the buzzard!

[EXIT *furiously.*

Alwy. (*laughing.*) Ethwald, we have fulfill'd thy bidding well,
With little cost of craft! But let us follow,
And keep him to the bent.

[EXEUNT.

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

ACT III.

SCENE I. *A small close grove, with a steep rocky bank at one end of it. Several* Peasants *are discovered standing upon the bank, as if looking at some distant sight.*

1*st Pea.* Good lack a day! how many living souls,
In wide confused eddying motion mix'd,
Like cross set currents on the restless face
Of winter floods!
2*d Pea.* Where fight the Northern Mercians?
1*st Pea.* On the right.
The gentle Ethling, as I am inform'd,
Fights likewise on the right: heav'n spare his head!
'Tis his first battle.
3*d Pea.* Hear, hear! still louder swells that horrid sound.
1*st Pea.* Ay, many voices join in that loud din,
Which soon shall shout no more.
3*d Pea.* Ay, good neighbour,
Full gloriously now looks that cover'd field,
With all those moving ranks and glitt'ring arms;
But he who shall return by setting sun
Will see a sorry sight.

(*A loud distant noise.*)

1*st Pea.* Heav'n save us all! it is the warlike yell
Of those damn'd Britons that increaseth so.
By all the holy saints our men are worsted!
(*an increasing noise heard without.*)
Look! yonder look! they turn their backs and fly.

3*d Pea.* O blasting shame! where fights brave Ethwald now?
He is, I fear, far in the distant wing.
Let us be gone! we are too near them here:
The flight comes this way: hear that horrid sound!
The saints preserve us!

(*The sound of the battle increases, and is heard nearer. The* Peasants *come hastily down from the bank, and exeunt. Enter* EDWARD *with several followers disordered and panic-struck.*)

1*st Fol.* (*looking round.*) They cease to follow us: this thickest grove
Has stopp'd the fell pursuit: here may we rest.

(EDWARD *throws himself down at the root of a tree, and covers his face with his hands.*)

2*d Fol.* (*filling his helmet with water from a stream, and presenting it to* Edw.)
My prince, this cooling water will refresh you.

Ed. (*keeping his face still covered with one hand and waving him off with the other.*)
Away, away! and do not speak to me!

(*A deep pause, the noise of the battle is again heard coming nearer.*)

1*st Fol.* We must not tarry here. (*to* Edw.)
My Lord, the farther thickets of this wood
Will prove a sure concealment: shall we move?

Edw. (*still covering his face.*) Let the earth gape
and hide me. (*another deep pause.*)
3*d Fol. to* 1*st.* The sin of all this rout falls on
thy head,
Thou cursèd Thane! thou and thy hireling knaves
First turn'd your backs and fled.
1*st Fol. to* 3*d.* Thou liest, foul tongue! it was
thy kinsman there
Who first did turn; for I was borne away,
(*pointing to* 4*th* Fol.)
Unwillingly away, by the rude stream
Of his fear-stricken bands. When, till this hour,
Did ever armed Briton see my back?
4*th Fol.* Arm'd Britons dost thou call them?
devils they are!
Thou know'st right well they deal with wicked
sprites.
Those horrid yells were not the cries of men;
And fiends of hell look'd thro' their flashing eyes.
I fear to face the power of simple man
As little as thyself.

Enter more Fugitives.

1*st Fol.* (*to* Ed.) Up, my good Lord! Hence
let us quickly move;
We must not stay.
Ed. Then thrust me thro' and leave me.
I'll flee no more. (*looking up wildly, then fixing his
eyes wistfully upon* 3d Follower, *and
bending one knee to the ground.*)
Ebbert, thy sword is keen, thy arm is strong;
O, quickly do't! and I shall be with those
Who feel nor shame nor panic.

(3d Fol. *and several others turn their faces away and weep. Enter more* Fugitives.)

1*st Fol.* What, is all lost?

1*st Fug.* Yes, yes! our wing is beaten.
Seagurth alone, with a few desp'rate men,
Still sets his aged breast against the storm;
But thick the aimed weapons round him fly,
Like huntsmen's arrows round the toiled boar,
And he will soon be nothing.

Edw. (*starting up.*) O, God! O, living God! my noble father!
He has no son! — Off, ye debasing fears!
I'll tear thee forth, base heart, if thou dost let me.
(*coming forward and stretching out his arms.*)
Companions, noble Mercians — Ah, false word!
I may not call you noble. Yet, perhaps,
One gen'rous spark within your bosom glows.
Sunk in disgrace still lower than ye all,
I may not urge — Who lists will follow me!

All with one voice. We will all follow thee!

Ed. Will ye, in truth? then we'll be brave men still. (*brandishing his sword as he goes off.*)
My noble father!

[EXEUNT, *clashing their arms eagerly.*

SCENE II.

A confused noise of a battle is heard. The scene draws up and discovers the British *and* Mercian *armies engaged. Near the front of the stage they are seen in close fight, and the ground strew'd with several wounded and dead soldiers, as if they had been fighting for some time. Farther off, missile weapons and showers of arrows darken the air, and the view of the more distant battle is concealed in thick clouds of dust. The* Mercians *gain ground upon the* Britons; *and loud cries are raised by them to encourage one another. An active* Mercian *falls, and their progress is stopped whilst they endeavour to bear him off.*

Fallen Mercian. I'm slain, I'm slain! tread o'er me and push forward.

Mer. Chief. O stop not thus! to it again, brave Mercians!

(*The* Mercians *push on, encouraging one another with cries and clashing of arms: one of their bravest soldiers is wounded on the front of the stage and staggers backwards.*)

Wounded Mer. Ay, this is death: O that my life had held
To see the end of this most noble game! (*falls down, but seeing the* Mercians *about to push the* Britons *off the stage, raises himself half from the ground and claps his hands exultingly.*

Well fought, brave Mercian! On, my noble Mercians! (*Sinks down again.*)
I am in darkness now! a clod o' the earth! (*dies.*)
Britons. (*without.*) Fresh succour, Britons! courage! victory!
Carwallen and fresh succour!
(*The* Britons *now raise a terrible yell, and push back the* Mercians, *who yield ground and become spiritless and relaxed as their enemy becomes bolder. The* Britons *at last seize the* Mercian *standard, and raise another terrible yell, whilst the* Mercians *give way on every side.*)
1*st falling Mer.* Horror and death! the hand of wrath is o'er us!
2*d falling Mer.* A fell and fearful end! a bloody lair!
The trampling foe to tread out brave men's breath.
(*The* Britons *yell again, and the* Mercians *are nearly beat off the stage.*)
(*Voice without.*) Ethwald! the valiant Ethwald! succour, Mercians!
(*Voice within.*) Hear ye, brave comrades? Ethwald is at hand.

Enter ETHWALD, *with his sword drawn.*

Ethw. What, soldiers! yield ye thus, while vict'ry smiles
And bids us on to th' bent? Your northern comrades
Mock at their savage howls, and drive before them
These chafed beasts of prey. Come! to it bravely!

To it, and let their mountain matrons howl,
For these will soon be silent.
Give me the standard.

Voice. They have taken it.

Ethw. Taken! no, by the spirits of the brave!
Standard of ours on Snowdon winds to float!
No! this shall fetch it back! (*taking off his helmet and throwing it into the midst of the enemy, then rushing upon them bare-headed and sword in hand. The* Mercians *clash their arms and raise a great shout: the* Britons *are driven off the stage; whilst many of the dying* Mercians *clap their hands and raise a feeble shout after their comrades. The scene closes.*)

SCENE III.

An open space before a royal tent; the curtains of which are tucked up, and shew a company of warriors and dames within it. On either side of the open stage soldiers are drawn up in order. Enter two petty Thanes *on the front of the stage.*

1*st Thane.* Here let us stand and see the ceremony.
Without the tent, 'tis said the king will crown
The gallant Ethling with a wreath of honour,
As the chief agent in this victory
O'er stern Carwallen and his Britons gain'd.

2*d Thane.* Thou sayest well. Within the royal tent
They wait, as I am told, the Ethling's coming,
Who is full tardy. Softly, they come forth.

* How like a ship, with all her goodly sails
Spread to the sun, the haughty princess moves!

A flourish of trumpets. Enter from the tent the King, *with* ETHELBERT, EDRICK, Thanes, *and* Attendants; *and* ELBURGA, *with* DWINA *and* Ladies. *They advance towards the front of the stage.*

King. Nay, sweet Elburga, clear thy frowning brow;
He who is absent will not long delay
His pleasing duty here.

Elb. On such a day, my Lord, the brave I honour,
As those who have your royal arms maintain'd
In war's iron field, such honour meriting.
What individual chiefs, or here or absent,
Are therein lapt, by me unheeded is;
I deign not to regard it.

King. Thou art offended, daughter, but unwisely.
Plumed with the fairest honours of the field,
Such pious grief for a brave father's death,
Bespeaks a heart such as a gentle maid
In her faith-plighted Lord should joy to find.

Elb. Who best the royal honours of a prince
Maintains, best suits a royal maiden's love.

King. Elburga, thou forget'st that gentleness
Which suits thy gentle kind.

* Probably I have received this idea from Samson Agonistes, where Dalila is compared to a stately ship of Tarsus "with all her bravery on, and tackle trim," &c.

Elb. (*with much assumed stateliness.*) I hope, my Lord,
I do meantime that dignity remember,
Which doth beseem the daughter of a king!

King. Fie! clear thy cloudy brow! it is my will
Thou honour graciously his modest worth.
(Elb. *bows, but smiles disdainfully.*)
By a well feigned flight, he was the first
Who broke the stubborn foe, op'ning the road
To victory. Here, with some public mark
Of royal favour, by thy hand received,
I will to honour him; for, since the battle,
A gloomy melancholy o'er him broods,
E'en far exceeding what a father's death
Should cast upon a youthful victor's triumph.
Ah; here he comes! look on that joyless face!

Elb. (*aside to* Dwina, *looking scornfully to* Edward *as he approaches.*)
Look with what slow and piteous gait he comes!
Like younger brother of a petty Thane,
Timing his footsteps to his father's dirge.

Dwina. (*aside.*) Nay, to my fancy seems it wond'rous graceful.

Elb. (*contemptuously.*) A youth, indeed, who might with humble grace
Beneath thy window tell his piteous tale.

Enter EDWARD, *followed by* ETHWALD *and* Attendants.

King. Approach, my son: so will I call thee now.

Here is a face whose smiles should gild thy honours,
If thou art yet awake to beauty's power.
Edw. (*kissing* Elburga's *hand respectfully.*)
Honour'd I am indeed; most dearly honour'd:
I feel it here, (*his hand on his heart,*) and should be joyful too,
If aught could gild my gloom.
(*Sighs very deeply, then suddenly recollecting himself.*)
Elburga, thou wert ever fond of glory,
And ever quick to honour valiant worth:
Ethwald, my friend—hast thou forgotten Ethwald? (*Presenting* Ethw. *to her.*)
Elb. Could I forget the warlike Thane of Mairnieth.
I must have barr'd mine ears against all sound;
For every voice is powerful in his praise,
And every Mercian tongue repeats his name.
(*Smiling graciously upon* Ethw.)
King. (*impatiently.*) Where go we now? we wander from our purpose.
Edward, thy youthful ardour season'd well
With warlike craft, has crown'd my age with glory:
Here be thy valour crown'd, it is my will,
With honour's wreath, from a fair hand receiv'd.
(*Giving the wreath to* Elburga.)
Edw. (*earnestly.*) I do beseech you, uncle!—pray receive
My grateful thanks! the mournful cypress best
Becomes my brow: this honour must not be.

King. Nay, lay aside unseemly diffidence;
It must be so.
Edw. (*impressively.*) My heart is much depress'd:
O do not add
The burden of an undeserved honour,
To bend me to the earth!
King. These warlike chieftains say it is deserv'd,
And nobly earn'd. It is with their concurrence
That now I offer thee this warrior's wreath:
Yes, Ethling, and command thee to receive it.
(*Holding up his hand.*) There, let the trumpet sound. (*Trumpets sound.*)
Edw. (*holding up his hands distractedly.*)
Peace, peace! nor put me to this agony! (*trumpets cease.*)
And am I then push'd to this very point?
Well, then, away deceit! too long hast thou
Like the incumbent monster of a dream
On the stretch'd sleeper's breast, depress'd my soul:
I shake thee off, foul mate! O royal sire,
And you, ye valiant Mercians, hear the truth!
Ye have believ'd, that by a feigned flight,
I gained the first advantage o'er the foe,
And broke their battle's strength: O would I had!
That flight, alas! was real; the sudden impulse
Of a weak mind, unprov'd and strongly struck
With new and horrid things, until that hour
Unknown and unimagin'd.—
Nor was it honour's voice that call'd me back:
The call of nature saved me. Noble Seagurth!

Had I been son of any sire but thee,
I had in dark and endless shame been lost,
Nor e'er again before these valiant men
Stood in this royal presence.
In all my fortune, blest I am alone
That my brave father, rescued by these arms,
Look'd on me, smiling thro' the shades of death,
And knew his son. He was a noble man!
He never turn'd from danger—but his son—
(*Many voices at once.*) His son is worthy of him!
(*Repeated again with more voices.*) His son is worthy of him!
Ethelbert. (*with enthusiasm.*) His son is worthy of the noblest sire that ever wielded sword!
(*Voices.*) Crown him, fair princess! Crown the noble Edward!
(Elburga *offers him the wreath, which he puts aside vehemently.*)
Edw. Forbear! a band of scorpions round my brow
Would not torment me like this laurel wreath.
(Elb. *turns from him contemptuously, and gives the wreath to the* King.)
Edw. (*to* King.) What, good, my Lord! is there not present here
A Mercian brow deserving of that wreath?
Shall he, who did with an uncover'd head
Your battle fight, still wear his brows unbound?
Do us not this disgrace!
King. (*fretfully.*) Thou dost forget the royal dignity:
Take it away. (*Giving it to an officer.*)

(*A confused murmuring amongst the soldiers.*)
(*Aside to the* Seneschal, *alarmed.*) What noise is that?

Sen. (*aside to* King.) Your troops, my sire, are much dissatisfied,
For that their favourite chief by you is deem'd
Unworthy of the wreath.

King. (*aside.*) What, is it so? call back mine officer. (*taking the wreath again, and giving it to* Elb.)
This wreath was meant for one of royal line,
But every noble Mercian, great in arms,
Is equal to a prince.
Crown the most valiant Ethwald.

Elb. (*crowning* Ethw. *with great assumed majesty.*)
Long may thy laurels flourish on thy brow,
Most noble chief!

(Ethw. *takes the wreath and presses it to his lips, bowing to* Elb. *then to the* King.)

Ethw. They who beneath the royal banner fight,
Unto the fortunes of their royal chief
Their success owe. Honour'd, indeed, am I
That the brave Ethling hath so favour'd me,
And that I may, most humbly at your feet,
My royal sire, this martial garland lay.

(*He, kneeling, lays the wreath at the* King's *feet; the* King *raises him up and embraces him; the* Soldiers *clash their arms and call out.*)

Sold. Long live the king! and long live noble Ethwald!

(*This is several times repeated.* EXEUNT King, Edward, Elburga, *&c. &c.* Elburga *looking graciously to* Ethwald *as she goes off.* *Manent* Ethwald *and* Ethelbert.)

Eth. (*repeating indignantly as they go off.*)
Long live the King, and long live noble Ethwald!
Fie on the stupid clowns, that did not join
The gen'rous Edward's name! (*to* Ethw. *who is standing looking earnestly after the princess.*)
What dost thou gaze on?

Ethw. The princess look'd behind her as she went.

Eth. And what is that to thee?

(*Walks silently across the stage once or twice, gloomy and dissatisfied, then turning short upon* Ethw.)

When wert thou last to see the lovely Bertha?

Ethw. (*hesitating.*) I cannot reckon it unto the day—
Some moons ago.

Eth. Some moons! The moon in her wide course shines not
Upon a maid more lovely.

Ethw. I know it well.

Eth. Thou dost.

Ethw. (*after a pause, looking attentively to* Eth. *who stands muttering to himself.*)
Methinks thou holdest converse with thyself.

Eth. (*speaking aloud, as if he continued to talk to himself.*)
She steps upon the flowery bosom'd earth,

As tho' it were a foot-cloth, fitly spread
Beneath the tread of her majestic toe;
And looks upon the human countenance,
Whereon her Maker hath the signs impress'd
Of all that he within the soul hath stored
Of great and noble, gen'rous and benign,
As on a molten plate, made to reflect
Her grandeur and perfections.

Ethw. Of whom speak'st thou?

Eth. Not of the gentle Bertha. [EXIT.

Ethw. What may he mean? He mark'd, with much displeasure,
The soldiers shout my name, and now my favour
With Mercia's princess frets him. What of this?
Ha! hath his active mind outrun mine own
In shaping future consequences? Yes,
It must be so; a cloudy curtain draws,
And to mine eye a goodly prospect shews,
Extending — No, I must not look upon it.
[EXIT *hastily.*

SCENE IV.

An open space with arms, garments, and other spoils of the Britons *heaped up on every side of the stage. Enter* Soldiers, *and range themselves in order, then enter* ETHELBERT *and a* Soldier, *talking as they enter.*

Eth. Ethwald amongst his soldiers, dost thou say,
Divides his spoil?

Sol. He does, most bountifully;
Nor to himself more than a soldier's share
Retains, he is so gen'rous and so noble.

Eth. I thank thee, friend. (Soldier *retires.*)
(Eth. *after a pause.*)
I like not this: behind those heaps I'll stand,
And mark the manner of this distribution. (*retires.*)

Enter ALWY *and a petty* Thane.

Alwy. Brave warriours! ye are come at his desire,
Who for each humble soldier, bold in arms,
That has beneath his orders fought, still bears
A brother's heart. You see these goodly spoils:
He gives them not unto the cloister'd priests:
His soldiers pray for him. (Soldiers *shout.*)

Thane. (*to* ALWY.) What is thy meaning?

Alwy. Knowest thou not the king has now bestow'd
The chiefest portion of his British spoil
On Alban's abbey?

Enter ETHWALD.

(Soldiers *shouting very loud.*) Long live brave Ethwald! health to noble Ethwald!

Ethw. Thanks for these kindly greetings, valiant hearts!
(Soldiers *shout again very loud.*)
In truth I stand before you, brave companions,
Somewhat asham'd; for with my wishes match'd,
These hands are poor and empty. (*Loud acclamations.*)
I thank you all again; for well I see
You have respect unto the dear good will
That must enrich these heaps of homely stuff.

Soldiers. Long live our gen'rous leader!

Ethw. (*giving a* Soldier *a helmet filled with lots.*)
Here, take the lots and deal them fairly round.
Heaven send to all of you, my valiant friends,
A portion to your liking. This rough heap
(*Pointing to the arms.*)
Will give at least to each some warlike trophy,
Which henceforth, hung upon his humble walls,
Shall tell his sons and grandsons yet to come
In what proud fields, and with what gallant mates
Their father fought. And I, methinks, well pleas'd,
Resting, as heretofore I oft have done,
My wand'ring steps beneath your friendly roofs,
Shall, looking up, the friendly token spy,
And in my host a fellow soldier hail.

Soldiers. (*with loud acclamations.*)
God bless you, noble chief! unto the death
We'll hold to you, brave leader!

Ethw. And if to you I hold not, valiant Mercians,
No noble chief am I. This motley geer,
(*Pointing to the spoils.*)
Would it were all composed of precious things!
That to his gentle wife or favour'd maid,
Each soldier might have borne some goodly gift;
But tell them, British matrons cross the woof
With coarser hands than theirs.

1*st Sol.* Saint Alban bless his noble countenance!
'Twas fashion'd for bestowing.

2*d Sol.* Heav'n store his halls with wealth!

Ethw. (*going familiarly amongst the soldiers as the lots are drawing.*)
Well, Ogar, hast thou drawn? good luck to thee.

And thou, good Baldwin, too? Yet fie upon it!
The heaviest weapon of the British host
Lacks weight of metal for thy sinewy arm.——
Ha! health to thee, mine old and honest host!
I'm glad to see thee with thine arm unbound.
And ruddy too! thy dame should give me thanks:
I send thee home to her a younger man
Than I receiv'd thee. (*to the* Soldier *with the lots who is passing him.*)
Nay, stay thee, friend, I pray, nor pass me o'er.
We all must share alike: hold out thy cap.
(*Smiling as he draws.*)
The knave would leave me out.
(*Loud acclamations, the* Soldiers *surrounding him and clashing their arms.*)

Enter SELRED *and* Followers.

Sel. (*to* Sol.) Ha! whence comes all this uproar?
Sol. Know you not?
Your noble brother 'midst his soldiers shares
His British spoils.
Sel. The grateful knaves! is all their joy for this?
(*To his* Followers.)
Well, go and add to it my portion also;
'Twill make them roar the louder. Do it quickly.
[EXIT.
Soldiers. (*looking after* Sel.) Heaven bless him too, plain, honest, careless soul!
He gives as tho' he gave not. (*Loud acclamations.*)
Long live brave Ethwald, and the noble Selred!

Ethw. (*aside to* Alwy, *displeased.*) How came
he here?
Alwy. I cannot tell.
Ethw. (*to* Sol.) We are confined within this
narrow space:
Go range yourselves at large on yon green sward,
And there we'll spread the lots.
(EXEUNT *the* Soldiers, *arranging themselves as they go.*)

SCENE V.

An apartment in a royal castle. Enter ETHELBERT, *and leans his back upon a pillar near the front of the stage, as if deeply engaged in gloomy thoughts: afterwards enters* ETHWALD *by the opposite side, at the bottom of the stage, and approaches* Eth. *slowly, observing him attentively as he advances.*

Ethw. Thou art disturbed, Ethelbert.
Eth. I am.
Ethw. Thine eyes roll strangely, as tho' thou
beheld'st
Some dreadful thing:—
On what look'st thou?
Eth. Upon my country's ruin.
The land is full of blood: her savage birds
O'er human carcases do scream and batten:
The silent hamlet smokes not; in the field
The aged grandsire turns the joyless soil:
Dark spirits are abroad, and gentle worth
Within the narrow house of death is laid,
An early tenant.

Ethw. Thou'rt beside thyself!
Think'st thou that I, with these good arms, will stand
And suffer all this wreck?

Eth. Ha! say'st thou so? Alas, it is thyself
Who rul'st the tempest! (*Shaking his head solemnly.*)

Ethw. If that I bear the spirit of a man,
Thou falsely see'st! Think'st thou I am a beast;
A fanged wolf, reft of all kindly sense,
That I should do such deeds?
I am a man aspiring to be great,
But loathing cruelty: who wears a sword
That will protect and not destroy the feeble.
(*Putting his hand vehemently upon his sword.*)

Eth. Ha! art thou roused! blessings on thy wrath!
I'll trust thee still. But see, the Ethling comes,
And on his face he wears a smile of joy.

Enter EDWARD, *advancing gaily to* ETHWALD.

Ed. A boon, a boon, great Mairnieth's Thane I crave.

Eth. You come not with a suppliant's face, my Lord.

Ed. Not much cast down for lack of confidence
My suit to gain. That envious braggard there,
The chief of Bournoth, says, no Mercian arm,
Of man now living, can his grandsire's sword
In warlike combat wield: and, in good sooth!
I forfeit forty of my fattest kine
If Ethwald's arm does not the feat achieve.

(*To* Ethw.) What say'st thou, friend? Methinks
thou'rt grave and silent:
Hast thou so soon thy noble trade forgot?
Have at it then! I'll rouse thy spirit up:
I'll soldier thee again. (*Drawing his sword playfully upon* Ethwald, *who defends himself in like manner.*)
Fie on't! that was a wicked northern push:
It smells of thine old sports in Mollo's walls.
(*Pauses and fights again.*)
To it again! How listless thou art grown!
Where is thy manhood gone?

Ethw. Fear not, my Lord, enough remains
behind
To win your forty kine.

Ed. I'll take thy word for't now: in faith,
I'm tired!
I've been too eager in the morning's chace
To fight your noonday battles. (*Putting the point of his sword to the ground, and leaning familiarly upon* Ethwald.)
My arm, I fear, would make but little gain
With Bournoth's sword. By arms and brave
men's love!
I could not brook to see that wordy braggard
Perching his paltry Sire above thy pitch:
It rais'd my fiend within. When I am great,
I'll build a tower upon the very spot
Where thou did'st first the British army stay,
And shame the grandsires of those mighty Thanes
Six ages deep. Lean I too hard upon thee?

Ethw. No, nothing hard: most pleasant and most kindly.
Take your full rest, my Lord.
Ed. In truth, I do: methinks it does me good
To rest upon thy brave and valiant breast.
Eth. (*stepping before them with great animation.*)
Well said, most noble Edward!
The bosom of the brave is that on which
Rests many a head: but most of all, I trow,
Th' exposed head of princely youth thereon,
Rests gracefully. (*Steps back some paces, and looks at them with delight.*)
Ed. You look upon us, Thane, with eager eyes
And looks of meaning.
Eth. Pardon me, I pray!
My fancy oftentimes will wildly play,
And strong conceits possess me.
Indulge my passing freak: I am a man
Upon whose grizzled head the work of time
Hath been by care perform'd, and, with the young,
Claiming the priv'lege of a man in years.
(*Taking the hands of* Ed. *and* Ethw. *and joining them together.*)
This is a lovely sight! indulge my fancy:
And on this sword, it is a brave man's sword,
Swear that you will, unto each other prove,
As prince and subject, true.
Ed. No, no, good Thane!
As friends, true friends! that doth the whole include.
I kiss the honour'd blade. (*Kissing the sword held out by* Eth.)

Eth. (*presenting the sword to* Ethw.) And what says noble Ethwald?

Ethw. All that the brave should say (*kissing it also.*)

Eth. (*triumphantly.*) Now, Mercia, thou art strong! give me your hands;
Faith, I must lay them both upon my breast!
(*Pressing both their hands to his breast.*)
This is a lovely sight!

Ethw. (*softened.*) You weep, good Ethelbert.

Eth. (*brushing off his tears with his hand.*)
Yes, yes! such tears as doth the warm shower'd earth
Shew to the kindly sun.

Ed. (*to* Ethw. *gently clapping his shoulder.*)
I love this well: thou like a woman weep'st,
And fightest like a man. But look, I pray!
There comes my arm's-man with the braggard's sword:
Let us assay it yonder. [EXEUNT.

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

ACT IV.

SCENE I. *An apartment in a royal castle.* ETHWALD *is discovered sitting in deep meditation by the side of a couch, with a lamp burning by him on a high stand: the rest of the stage entirely dark.*

Ethw. Why am I haunted with these thoughts? What boots it
That from their weak and priest-beridden king
The soldiers turn distasteful, and on me
In mutter'd wishes call? What boots all this?
Occasion fairly smiles, but I am shackled;
Elsewhere I needs must turn my climbing thoughts,
But where? The youthful see around them spread
A boundless field of undetermin'd things,
Towering in tempting greatness:
But, to the closer scan of men matured,
These fade away, and in the actual state
Of times and circumstances each perceives
A path which doth to his advancement lead,
And only one; as to the dazzled eye
Of the night rev'ller, o'er his emptied bowl,
The multiplied and many whirling lights
Do shrink at last into one single torch,
Shedding a steady ray. I see my path;
But what is that to me? my steps are chain'd.

Amongst the mighty great, the earth's high lords,
There is no place for me! I must lie down
In the dark tomb with those, whose passing brightness
Shines for a while, but leaves no ray behind.
(*Throws himself half upon the couch, and groans heavily.*)

Enter Boy.

Boy. My Lord, my Lord! (Ethw. *lifts up his head, and looks sternly at him.*)
Are you unwell, my Lord?

Ethw. What dost thou want?

Boy. I could not sleep: and as I list'ning lay
To the drear wind that whistles thro' these towers,
Methought I heard you groan like one in pain.

Ethw. Away, and go to sleep: I want thee not:
I say, begone. (*sternly.*) [Exit Boy.
(*He pauses a while, then sighs very deeply.*)
He hangs upon me like a dead man's grasp
On the wreck'd swimmer's neck—his boyish love
Was not my seeking; it was fasten'd on me,
And now it hath become an iron band
To fetter down my powers. O that I were
Amidst the warlike and ungentle cast
To strive uncumber'd! What have I to do
With soft affection? (*soften'd.*) Yet it needs must be!
His gen'rous love:—his brave ungrudging love:
His manly gentle love—O that he had
Mine equal friend been born, who in my rise
Had fair advancement found, and by my side
The next in honour stood!

He drags me to the earth! I needs must lay
My head i' the dust.—Dull hopeless privacy!
From it my soul recoils: unto my nature
It is the death of death, horrid and hateful.
(*Starting up eagerly.*) No, in the tossed bark,
Commander of a rude tumultuous crew,
On the wild ocean would I rather live;
Or in the mined caverns of the earth
Untamed bands of lawless men controul,
By crime and dire necessity enleagued:
Yea, in the dread turmoil of midnight storms,
If such there be, lead on the sable hosts
Of restless sprites, than say to mortal man
"Thou art my master."

Enter Boy.

What here again?

Boy. O pardon me, my Lord! I am in fear;
Strange sounds do howl and hurtle round my bed;
I cannot rest.

Ethw. Be gone, thou wakeful pest! I say, begone! [Exit Boy.

(Ethw. *walks several times across the stage and then pauses.*)

Yet in my mind one ever-present thought
Rises omnipotent o'er all the rest,
And says, "Thou shalt be great."
What may this mean? before me is no way.
What deep endued seer will draw this veil
Of dark futurity? Of such I've heard,
But when the troubled seek for them, they are not.

Re-enter Boy.

(*Stamping with his foot.*) What! here a third time?

Boy. (*falling at his feet.*) O, my noble master!
If you should slay me I must come to you;
For in my chamber fearful things there be,
That sound i' the dark; O, do not chide me back.

Ethw. Strange sound within thy chamber, foolish wight!

Boy. (*starting.*) Good mercy, list!

Ethw. It is some night-bird screaming on the tower.

Boy. Ay, so belike it seemeth, but I know—

Ethw. What dost thou know?

Boy. It is no bird, my Lord.

Ethw. What would'st thou say?

Boy. (*clasping his hands together, and staring earnestly in* Ethw.*'s face.*)
At dead of night, from the dark Druid's cave
Up rise unhallow'd sprites, and o'er the earth
Hold for the term their wicked rule. Aloft,
Some mounted on the heavy sailing cloud,
Oft pour down noisome streams or biting hail
On the benighted hind, and from his home,
With wayward eddying blasts, still beat him back.
Some on the waters shriek like drowning men,
And, when the pitying passenger springs forth,
To lend his aid, the dark flood swallows him.
Some on lone marshes shine like moving lights;
And some on towers and castle turrets perch'd,
Do scream like nightly birds, to scare the good,
Or rouse the murd'rer to his bloody work.

Ethw. The Druid's cave, say'st thou? What cave is that?
Where is it? Who hath seen it? What scar'd fool
Hath fill'd thine ears with all these horrid things?
Boy. It is a cavern vast and terrible,
Under the ground full deep; perhaps, my Lord,
Beneath our very feet, here as we stand;
For few do know the spot and centre of it,
Tho' many mouths it has and entries dark.
Some are like hollow pits bor'd thro' the earth,
O'er which the list'ning herdsman bends his ear,
And hears afar their lakes of molten fire
Swelt'ring and boiling like a mighty pot.
Some like straight passes thro' the rifted rocks,
From which oft issue shrieks, and whistling gusts,
And wailings dismal. Nay, some, as they say,
Deep hollow'd underneath the river's bed,
Which shew their narrow op'nings thro' the fern
And tangling briars, like dank and noisome holes
Wherein foul adders breed. But not far hence
The chiefest mouth of all, 'midst beetling rocks
And groves of blasted oaks, gapes terrible.
Ethw. So near? but who are they who dwell within?
Boy. The female high arch Druid therein holds,*
With many Druids tending on her will,

* It is natural to suppose that the Diviners or Fortune-tellers of this period should, in their superstitions and pretensions, very much resemble the ancient Druidesses who were so much revered amongst the Britons as oracles and prophetesses, and that they should, amongst the vulgar, still retain the name of

(Old, as they say, some hundred years or more)
Her court, where horrid spells bind to her rule
Spirits of earth and air.

Ethw. Ay, so they tell thee,
But who is he that has held converse with her?

Boy. Crannock, the bloody prince, did visit her,
And she did shew to him the bloody end
Whereto he soon should come; for all she knows
That is or has been or shall come to pass.

Ethw. Yes, in times past such intercourse might be,
But who has seen them now?

Boy. Thane Ethelbert.

Ethw. (*starting.*) What said'st thou, Ethelbert?

Boy. Yes, truly; oft he goes to visit them
What time the moon rides in her middle course.

Ethw. Art thou assured of this?

Boy. A youth who saw him issue from the cave;
'Twas him who told it me.

Ethw. Mysterious man!
(*After a pause.*) Where sleeps the Thane?

Boy. If walls and doors may hold him,
He sleeps not distant, in the Southern Tower.

Ethw. Take thou that lamp, and go before me then.

their great predecessors. In Henry's History of Britain, vol. i. p. 181, it will be found that the superstitious practices of the Druids continued long after their religion was abolished, and resisted for a long time the light of christianity; and that even so late as the reign of Canute, it was necessary to make laws against it.

Boy. Where?

Ethw. To the Southern Tower. Art thou afraid?

Boy. No, my good Lord, but keep you close behind.

[EXEUNT, Boy *bearing the lamp, and looking often behind to see that* Ethw. *is near him.*

SCENE II.

A small gallery or passage with a door in front, which is opened, and enter ETHWALD, *and* ETHELBERT *with a lamp in his hand.*

Eth. Then, by the morrow's midnight moon, we meet
At the Arch Sister's cave: till then, farewel!

Ethw. Farewel! I will be punctual. [EXIT.

Eth. (*looking after him for some time before he speaks.*)
It ever is the mark'd propensity
Of restless and aspiring minds to look
Into the stretch of dark futurity.
But be it so: it now may turn to good.

[EXIT, *returning back again into the same chamber from which he came.*

SCENE III.

A wide arched cave, rude but grand, seen by a sombre light; a small furnace burning near the front of the stage. Enter ETHWALD *and* ETHELBERT, *who pause and look round for some time without speaking.*

Ethw. Gloomy, and void, and silent!

Eth. Hush!

Ethw. What hearest thou?

Eth. Their hollow sounding steps. Lo! see'st thou not?

(*Pointing to the further end of the stage, where, from an obscure recess, enter three* Mystics *robed in white, and ranged on one side of the stage, point to* Ethwald: *whilst from another obscure recess enter three* Mystic Sisters, *and ranged on the opposite side point to* Eth. *then from a mid recess enters the* Arch Sister *robed also in white, but more majestic than the others, and a train of* Mystics *and* Mystic Sisters *behind her. She advances halfway up the stage, then stops short, and points also to* Ethwald.)

(*All the* Mystics, *&c. speaking at once.*)

Who art thou?

Arch Sist. I know thee who thou art; the hand of Mercia:

The hand that lifts itself above the head.

I know thee who thou art.

Ethw. Then haply ye do know my errand too.

Arch Sist. I do; but turn thee back upon thy steps,
And tempt thy fate no farther.

Ethw. From the chaf'd shore turn back the swelling tide!
I came to know my fate, and I will know it.

1*st Mystic.* Must we call up from the deep centre's womb
The spirits of the night and their dread Lord?

1*st Myst. S.* Must we do that which makes the entombed dead
From coffins start?

Ethw. Raise the whole host of darkness an ye will,
But I must be obey'd.

(*The* Arch Sister *shrieks, and, throwing her mantle over her face, turns to go away.*)

Ethw. If there is power in mortal arm to hold you,
Ye stir not hence until I am obey'd.

1*st Myst.* And how compell'st thou?

Ethw. With this good sword.

1*st Myst.* Swords here are children's wands of no avail:
There, warriour, is thy weapon.

Ethw. Where, Mystic? say.

1*st Mystic.* (*pointing to the furnace.*) Behold within that fire
A bar of burning iron! pluck it forth.

Ethw. (*resolutely.*) I will.

(*Goes to the furnace, and putting in his hand, pulls out what seems a red hot bar of iron.*)

Arch Sist. (*throwing off her mantle.*)
Thou hast subdued me ; thou shalt be obey'd.
Ethw. (*casting away the bar.*)
Away, thou paltry terrour!
Arch Sist. (*to* Ethw.) We now begin our rites : be firm, be silent.

(*She stretches forth her hand with a commanding air, and the* Mystics *and* Mystic Sisters *begin their incantations at the bottom of the stage, moving round in several mazy circles one within another. Fire is at last seen flashing from the midst of the inner circle, and immediately they all begin a hollow muttering sound, which becomes louder and louder, till at length it is accompanied with dismal sounds from without, and distant music, solemn and wild.*)

Ethw. (*grasping* Ethelbert's *hand.*) What dismal sounds are these ?
'Tis like a wild responsive harmony,
Tun'd to the answ'ring yells of damned souls.
What follows this ? Some horrid thing! Thou smilest :
Nay, press thy hand, I pray thee, on my breast ;
There wilt thou find no fear.
Eth. Hush ! hear that distant noise.
Ethw. 'Tis thunder in the bowels of the earth,
Heard from afar.

(*A subterraneous noise like thunder is heard at a distance, becoming louder as it approaches. Upon hearing this, the* Mystics

suddenly leave off their rites: the music ceases, and they, opening their circles, range themselves on either side of the stage, leaving the Arch Sister *alone in the middle.*)

Arch Sist. (*holding up her hand.*) Mystics and Mystic Maids, and leagued bands!
The master spirit comes: prepare.
(*All repeat after her.*) Prepare.
1*st Mystic.* Hark! thro' the darken'd realms below,
Thro' the fiery regions glow;
Thro' the massy mountain's core,
Thro' the mines of living ore;
Thro' the yawning caverns wide,
Thro' the solid and the void;
Thro' the dank and thro' the dry,
Thro' th' unseen of mortal eye;
Upon the earthquake's secret course, afar
I hear the sounding of thy car:
Sulphureous vapours load the rising gale;
We know thy coming; mighty master, hail!
(*They all repeat.*) Mighty master, hail!
(*The stage darkens by degrees, and a thick vapour begins to ascend at the bottom of the stage.*)
2*d Mystic.* Hark, hark! what murmurs fill the dome!
Who are they who with thee come?
Those who, in their upward flight,
Rouse the tempests of the night:
Those who ride in flood and fire;

Those who rock the tumbling spire:
Those who, on the bloody plain,
Shriek with the voices of the slain:
Those who thro' the darkness glare,
And the sleepless murd'rer scare:
Those who take their surly rest
On the troubled dreamer's breast:
Those who make their nightly den
In the guilty haunts of men.
Thro' the heavy air I hear
Their hollow trooping onward bear:
The torches' shrinking flame is dim and pale;
I know thy coming; mighty master, hail!
(*All repeat again.*) Mighty master, hail!
(*The stage becomes still darker, and a thicker vapour ascends.*)
3d Mystic. Lo! the mystic volumes rise!
Wherein are lapt from mortal eyes
Horrid deeds as yet unthought,
Bloody battles yet unfought:
The sudden fall and deadly wound
Of the tyrant yet uncrown'd;
And his line of many dyes
Who yet within the cradle lies.
Moving forms, whose stilly bed
Long hath been among the dead;
Moving forms, whose living morn
Breaks with the nations yet unborn,
In mystic vision walk the horrid pale:
We own thy presence; mighty master, hail!
(*All.*) Mighty master, hail!

Enter from the farther end of the stage crowds of terrible spectres, dimly seen through the vapour, which now spreads itself over the whole stage. All the Mystics *and* Mystic Sisters *bow themselves very low, and the* Arch Sister, *standing alone in the middle, bows to all the different sides of the cave.*

Ethw. (*to* 1*st* Mystic.) To every side the mystic mistress bows,
What meaneth this? mine eye no form perceives:
Where is your mighty chief?

1*st Mystic.* Above, around you, and beneath.

Ethw. Has he no form to vision sensible?

1*st Mystic.* In the night's noon, in the winter's noon, in the lustre's noon:
Of times twice ten within the century's round
Is he before our leagued bands confess'd
In dread appearance:
But in what form or in what circumstance
May not be told; he dies who utters it.

(Ethw. *shrinks at this, and seems somewhat appalled. The* Arch Sister, *after tossing about her arms, and writhing her body in a violent agitation, fixes her eyes, like one waked from a dream, stedfastly upon* Ethw.; *then going suddenly up to him, grasps him by the hand with energy.*)

Arch. Sist. Thou who would'st pierce the deep and awful shade
Of dark futurity, to know the state
Of after greatness waiting on thy will,

For in thy power acceptance or rejection
Is freely put, lift up thine eyes and say,
What see'st thou yonder?

(*Pointing to a dark arched opening in the roof of the cave, where an illuminated crown and sceptre appears.*)

Ethw. (*starting.*) Ha! e'en the inward vision of my soul
In actual form pourtray'd! (*his eyes bright'ning wonderfully.*)
Say'st thou it shall be mine?

Arch Sist. As thou shalt chuse.

Ethw. I ask of thee no more.

(*Stands gazing upon the appearance till it fades away.*)

So soon extinguish'd? Hath this too a meaning?
It says perhaps, my greatness shall be short.

Arch Sist. I speak to thee no further than I may,
Therefore be satisfied.

Ethw. And I am satisfied. Dread mystic maid,
Receive my thanks.

Arch Sist. Nay, Ethwald, our commission ends not here,
Stay and behold what follows.

(*The stage becomes suddenly dark, and most terrible shrieks, and groans, and dismal lamentations, are heard from the farther end of the cave.*)

Ethw. What horrid sounds are these?

Arch Sist. The varied voice of woe, of Mercia's woe :
Of those who shall, beneath thine iron hand,
The cup of mis'ry drink. There, dost thou hear
The dungeon'd captives' sighs, the shrilly shrieks
Of childless mothers and distracted maids,
Mix'd with the heavy groans of dying men?
The widow's wailings, too, and infant's cries —
(Ethw. *stops his ears in horrour.*)
Ay, stop thine ears; it is a horrid sound.

Ethw. Forefend that e'er again I hear the like!
What didst thou say? O, thou didst foully say!
Do I not know my nature? heav'n and earth
As soon shall change ——

(*A voice above.*) Swear not!

(*A voice beneath.*) Swear not!

(*A voice on the same level, but distant.*) Swear not!

Arch Sist. Now, once again, and our commission ends.
Look yonder, and behold that shadowy form.

(*Pointing to an arched recess, across which bursts a strong light, and discovers a crowned phantom, covered with wounds, and representing by its gestures one in agony.* Ethw. *looks, and shrinks back.*)

What dost thou see?

Ethw. A miserable man: his breast is pierced
With many wounds, and yet his gestures seem
The agony of a distracted mind
More than of pain.

Arch. Sist. But wears he not a crown?

Ethw. Why does it look so fix'dly on me thus?
What are its woes to me?
Arch Sist. They are thy own.
Know'st thou no traces of that alter'd form,
Nor see'st that crowned phantom is thyself?
Ethw. (*shudders, then, after a pause,*)
I may be doom'd to meet a tyrant's end,
But not to be a tyrant.
Did all the powers of hell attest the doom,
I would belie it. Know I not my nature?
By every dreaded power and hallow'd thing ——
(*Voice over the stage.*) Swear not!
(*Voice under the stage.*) Swear not!
(*Distant voice off the stage.*) Swear not!
(*Thundering noise is heard under ground. The stage becomes instantly quite dark, and* Mystics *and* Spirits, *&c. disappear,* Ethw. *and* Eth. *remaining alone.*)
Eth. (*after a pause.*) How art thou?
Ethw. Is it thy voice? O, let me feel thy grasp!
Mine ears ring strangely, and my head doth feel
As tho' I were bereaved off my wits.
Are they all gone? Where is thy hand, I pray?
We've had a fearful bout!
Eth. Thy touch is cold as death: let us ascend
And breathe the upper air. * [EXEUNT.

* I will not take upon me to say that, if I had never read Shakspeare's Macbeth, I should have thought of bringing Ethwald into a cavern under ground to enquire his destiny, though I believe this desire to look into futurity (particularly in a superstitious age) is a very constant attendant on ambition; but I hope the reader will not find of the above scene any offensive use made of the works of that great master.

SCENE IV.

A forest. Enter ETHWALD *with a bow in his hand, and a* Boy *carrying his arrows.*

Ethw. (*looking off the stage.*) Ha! Alwy, soon return'd! and with him comes
My faithful Ongar.

Enter ALWY *and* ONGAR *with bows also, as if in quest of sport, by the opposite side.*

Thou comest, Alwy, with a busy face. (*To* Boy.)
Go, Boy; I shot mine arrow o'er those elms,
Thou'lt find it far beyond. [EXIT Boy.
Now, friend, what tidings?

Alwy. Within the tufted centre of the wood
The friendly chiefs are met, thus, like ourselves
As careless ramblers guised, all to a man
Fix'd in your cause. Their followers too are firm;
For, much disgusted with the monkish face
Their feeble monarch wears, a warlike leader,
Far, far inferior to the noble Ethwald,
May move them as he lists.

Ethw. That time and circumstances on me call
Imperiously, I am well assured.
Good Ongar, what say'st thou? how thrives thy part
Of this important task?

Ong. Well as your heart could wish. At the next council,
Held in the royal chamber, my good kinsman
Commands the guard, and will not bar our way.

Ethw. May I depend on this?
Ong. You may, my Lord.
Ethw. Thanks to thee, Ongar! this is noble service,
And shall be nobly thank'd. There is, good Alwy,
Another point; hast thou unto the chiefs
Yet touch'd upon it?
Alwy. Yes, and they all agree 'tis most expedient
That with Elburga's hand, since weaker minds
Are blindly wedded to the royal line,
Your right be strengthen'd.
Ethw. And this they deem expedient?
Alwy. You sigh, my lord; she is, indeed, less gentle ——
Ethw. Regard it not, it is a passing thought,
And it will have its sigh, and pass away.
(*Turning away for a little space, and then coming forward again.*)
What means hast thou devised, that for a term
Selred and Ethelbert may be remov'd?
For faithful to the royal line they are,
And will not swerve: their presence here were dang'rous:
We must employ them in some distant strife.
Alwy. I have devis'd a plan, but for the means
Brave Ongar here stands pledged. Woggarwolfe,
Who once before unweetingly has served us,
Will do the same again.
Ethw. How so? 'tis said that since his last affray,
With the keen torment of his wounds subdu'd,

On sick bed laid by the transforming pow'rs
Of artful monks, he has become most saintly.
Alwy. Well, but we trust his saintship ne'ertheless
May still be lur'd to do a sinner's work.
To burn the castle of a hateful heretic
Will make amends for all his bloody deeds:
You catch the plan: nay, Hexulf and his priest
Will be our help-mates here. Smile not; good Ongar
Has pledged his word for this.
Ethw. And I will trust to it. This will, indeed,
Draw off the Thanes in haste. But who is near?
Sculking behind yon thicket stands a man:
See'st thou? (*Pointing off the stage.*)
Alwy. Go to him, Ongar, scan him well,
And if his face betrays a list'ner's guilt —
Thou hast thy dagger there?
Ong. Yes, trust me well.
Ethw. Nay, Ongar, be not rash in shedding blood!
Let not one drop be spilt that may be spar'd.
Secure him if he wear a list'ner's face:
We are too strong for stern and ruthless caution.
[Exit Ongar.
I'm glad he is withdrawn a little space,
Ere we proceed to join the leagued chiefs.
Hast thou agreed with Cuthbert? Is he sure?
Alwy. Sure. 'Tis agreed when next the Ethling hunts,
To lead him in the feigned quest of game
From his attendants; there, in ambush laid,
Cuthbert and his adherents seize upon him,

And will conduct him with the evening's close
To Arrick's rugged tower. All is prepar'd.

Ethw. But hast thou charged him well that this be done
With all becoming care and gentleness,
That nothing may his noble nature gall
More than the hard necessity compels?

Alwy. Do not mistrust us so! your brow is dark:
At Edward's name your changing countenance
Is ever clouded. (Ethw. *turns from him agitated.*)
You are disturb'd, my Lord.

Ethw. I am disturb'd. (*Turning round and grasping* Alwy *by the hand.*)
I'll tell thee, Alwy — yes I am disturb'd —
No gleam of glory thro' my prospect breaks,
But still his image, 'thwart the brightness cast,
Shades it to night.

Alwy. It will be always so: but wherefore should it?
Glory is ever bought by those who earn it
With loss of many lives most dear and precious.
So is it destin'd. Let that be unto him
Which in the crowded breach or busy field
All meet regardless from a foeman's hand.
Doth the still chamber, and the muffled tread,
And th' unseen stroke that doth th' infliction deal,
Alter its nature?

Ethw. (*Pushing* Alwy *away from him vehemently, and putting up both his hands to his head.*)
Forbear! forbear! I shut mine eyes, mine ears;
All entrance bar that may into my mind

Th' abhorred thing convey. Have I not said,
Thou shalt not dare in word, in look, in gesture,
In slightest indication of a thought,
Hold with my mind such base communication?
By my sword's strength! did I not surely think
From this bold seizure of the sovereign power,
A pow'r for which I must full dearly pay,
So says the destiny that o'er me hangs,
To shield his weakness and restore again
In room of Mercia's crown a nobler sway,
Won by my sword, I would as lief—— Northumberland
Invites my arms, and soon will be subdu'd;
Of this full sure, a good amends may be
To noble Edward made.

Alwy. (*who during the last part of* Ethw.'*s speech has been smiling behind his back malignantly.*)

O yes, full surely:
And wand'ring harpers shall in hall and bower
Sing of the marv'llous deed.

Ethw. (*turning short upon him, and perceiving his smile.*)

Thou smilest methinks.
Full well I read the meaning of that look:
'Tis a fiend's smile, and it will prove a false one.
(*Turning away angrily, whilst* Alwy *walks to the bottom of the stage.*)
(*Aside, looking suspiciously after him.*) Have I offended him? he is an agent
Most needful to me. (*Aloud, advancing to him.*)
Good Alwy, anxious minds will often chide——

(*Aside, stopping short.*) He hears me not, or is
it but a feint ?

Alwy. (*looking off the stage.*) Your arrow-boy
returns.

Ethw. (*aside, nodding to himself.*) No, 'tis a free
and unoffended voice ;

I'm wrong. This is a bird whose fleshed beak
The prey too strongly scents to fly away :
I'll spare my courtesies. (*Aloud.*) What say'st
thou, Alwy?

Alwy. (*pointing.*) Your arrow-boy.

Ethw. I'm glad he is return'd.

Re-enter Boy.

Boy. No where, my Lord, can I the arrow find.

Ethw. Well, boy, it matters not ; let us move
on. [EXEUNT.

SCENE V.

A narrow gallery in an abbey or cloister, with several doors opening into it. Enter HEXULF *and* ONGAR *and* two Monks.

Hex. Fear not, brave Ongar, we, upon thy hint,
Will quickly act ; for here our eager wishes
Are with the Church's good most closely join'd.

First Monk. This is the time when he should
walk abroad.

(*Listening.*) I hear him at his door.

Hex. Leave us, good Ongar.

Ong. To your good skill I do commit it then ;
Having but only you, most rev'rend father,
To take my part against this wizard Thane.

First Monk. (*still listening.*) Begone, he issues forth. [EXIT Ongar.

(*One of the doors opens slowly, and enters* WOGGARWOLFE, *wrapped in a cloak, and his head bound.*

Hex. Good-morrow, valiant Thane, whose pious gifts
Have won heav'n's grace to renovate thy strength,
And grant thee longer life, how goes thy health?

Wog. I thank you, rev'rend father, greatly mended.

First Monk. The prayers of holy men have power to save,
E'en on the very borders of the tomb,
The humbled soul who doth with gifts enrich
The holy church.

Second Monk. Didst thou not feel within thee
A peaceful calm, a cheering confidence,
Soon as thy pious offering was accepted?

Wog. (*hesitating.*) Yes, rev'rend fathers, — I have thought indeed —
Perhaps you meant it so — that since that time
The devil has not scar'd me in my dreams
So oft as he was wont, when sore with wounds
I first was laid upon my bed of pain.

Hex. Ay, that is much; but noble Woggarwolfe,
Thinkest thou not the church doth merit well
Some stable gift, some fix'd inheritance?
Thou hast those lands that are so nearly join'd
Unto St. Alban's abbey.

Wog. (*much surprised.*) My lands! give up my lands?

First Monk. What are thy lands
Compar'd to that which they will purchase for thee?

Sec. Monk. To lay thy coffin'd body in the ground,
Rob'd in the garb of holy men, and bless'd?

First Monk. To have thy tomb beneath the shading arch
Of sacred roof, where nought profane may enter;
Whilst midnight spirits stand and yell without,
But o'er the sacred threshold dare not trespass.

Wog. (*with a rueful countenance.*)
What, do you think I shall be dead so soon?

Hex. Life is uncertain; but how glorious, Thane,
To look beyond this wicked world of strife,
And for thyself a lofty seat provide
With saints and holy men, and angel bands!

Wog. Nay, father, I am not so highly bent;
Do but secure me from the horrid fangs
Of the terrific fiend: I am not proud;
That will suffice me.

Hex. Nay, herein thy humility we praise not,
And much I fear, at such a humble pitch,
He who so lately scar'd thee in thy dreams
May reach thee still.

First Monk. O think of this!

Hex. Dreadful it is, thou know'st,
To see him in thy dreams; but when awake,
Naked, and all uncloth'd of flesh and blood,
As thou at last must be; how wilt thou bear

To see him yelling o'er thee as his prey?
Bearing aloft his dark and hideous form;
Grinding his horrid jaws and darting on thee
His eyes of vivid fire? (*The* Monks *sign themselves with great marks of fear, and* Woggarwolfe *looks terrified.*)
Ah! think'st thou, Thane,
That many gifts, ay, half of all thou'rt worth,
Would dearly purchase safety from such terrours?

Wog. (*in a quick perturbed voice.*)
I have the plunder of two neighb'ring chiefs,
Whom I surprised within their towers and slew;
I'll give you all — if that suffices not,
I'll fall upon a third, ay, tho' it were
My next of kin, nor spare of all his goods
One fragment for myself. O holy fathers!
I humbly crave saintly protection of you.

Hex. Nay, Woggarwolfe, on shrines of holy saints
No gift ere works with efficacious power
By force and violence gain'd; unless, indeed,
It be the spoil of some unsaintly Thane,
Some faithless wizard or foul heretic.
Thou hast a neighbour, impious Ethelbert;
His towers to burn and consecrate his spoils,
O'er all thy sins would cast a sacred robe,
On which nor fiend nor devil durst fix a fang.
But now thou lackest strength for such a work,
And may'st be dead ere thou hast time to do it:
Therefore I counsel thee, give up thy lands.

Wog. O, no! I'm strong enough: my men are strong.
Give us your rev'rend blessing o'er our heads
And we'll set out forthwith.
Hex. Then nothing doubt that on your worthy zeal
Will fall the blessing. Let us onward move.
Where are thy followers? (EXEUNT Hex. *talking busily to* Wog. *and the* Monks *smiling to one another as they go out.*)

SCENE VI.

The royal apartment: the King *is discovered with* HEXULF, *the* Seneschal, *and several* Friends *or* Counsellors, *seated round a council table.*

King. (*as if continuing to speak.*)
It may be so: youth finds no obstacle,
But I am old.
Full many a storm on this grey head has beat;
And now, on my high station do I stand,
Like the tired watchman in his air-rock'd tower,
Who looketh for the hour of his release.
I'm sick of worldly broils, and fain would rest
With those who war no more. One gleam of light
Did sweetly cheer the ev'ning of my day:
Edward, my son! he was the kindliest prop
That age did ever rest on — he is gone,
What should I fight for now?
Sen. For thine own honour; for the weal of Mercia,
With weapons in our hands, and strong in men,

Who to the royal standard soon will flock,
If summon'd by thy firm and gen'ral orders.
Shall these men be our masters? Heaven forefend!
Five thousand warriors might disperse the foe,
Even with that devil Ethwald at their head;
And shall we think of granting to those rebels
Their insolent demands?

King. Good Seneschal, if that you think our strength
Permits us still in open field to strive
With hope of good, I am not yet so old
But I can brace these stiffen'd limbs in iron,
And do a soldier's service. (*To 2d* Coun.) Thane of Mordath,
Thy visage light'neth not upon these hopes;
What are thy thoughts?

Sec. Coun. E'en that these hopes will bring us to a state
Reft of all hope.
The rebel chiefs but seek their own enrichment,
Not Ethwald's exaltation, good my Lord;
Bribe them, and treat for peace. Lack you the means;
The church, for whose enriching you have rais'd
This storm, can well supply it; and most surely
Will do it cheerfully. (*Turning to* Hexulf.)

Hex. No, by the holy mass! that were to bring
The curse of heav'n upon our impious heads.
To spoil the holy church is sacrilege:
And to advise such spoil in anywise
Is sacrilegious and abominable.

First Coun. I am as faithful to the holy church
As thou art, angry priest. I do defy thee —

Sen. What, have ye no respect unto the king?
I do command you, peace. Who now intrudes?

Enter a Servant *in great terrour.*

Serv. The rebel force! the castle is surprised!
They are at hand — they have o'erpower'd the guard.

Sec. Coun. Pray God thou liest! I think it cannot be. (*They all rise up alarmed.*)

Serv. It is as true as I do tread this spot.

Enter a Soldier *wounded.*

King. (*to* Sol.) Ha! what say'st thou? thou bearest for thy words
A rueful witness.

Sol. Take arms, and save the king, if it be possible.
The rebel chieftains have the gates surprised,
And gain'd, below, the entrance of this tower.
They struggled for the pass; sharp was the broil;
This speaks for me, that I have borne my part.
(*Falls down exhausted.*)

Hex. (*to* King.) Retire, my Lord, into the higher chamber.
Your arm can give but small assistance here.
Until this horrid visit be o'erpast,
You may conceal yourself.

King. No, father, never shall the king of Mercia
Be, from his hiding-place, like a mean man
Pull'd forth. But, noble friends, it seems not wise
That this necessity should reach to you.
These rebels seek my life, and with that life

They will be satisfied. In my defence,
Thus taken as we are, all stand were useless;
Therefore, if now you will obey your king,
His last command, retire and save your lives
For some more useful end. Finding me here,
They will no farther search: retire, my friends.

Sec. Coun. What, leave our king to face his foes alone!

King. No, not alone; my friend, the Seneschal,
Will stay with me. We have been young together,
And the same storms in our rough day of life
Have beat upon us: be it now God's will,
We will lay down our aged heads together
In the still rest, and bid good night to strife.
Have I said well, my friend?

(*Holding out his hand to the* Seneschal.)

Sen. (*kissing his hand with great warmth, and putting one knee to the ground.*)
O my lov'd master! many a bounteous favour
Has shower'd upon me from your royal hand,
But ne'er before was I so proudly honour'd.

(*Rising up with assumed grace.*)
Retire, young men, for now I must be proud;
Retire, your master will confront the foe
As may become a king.

(*All calling out at once.*) No, no! we will not leave him.

(*They all range themselves, drawing their swords, round the* King, *and the old* Seneschal *stands, by pre-eminence, close to his master's side.*)

Sec. Coun. Here is a wall thro' which they first must force
A bloody way, ere on his royal head
One silver hair be scath'd.

Enter ETHWALD, ALWY, *and the* Conspirators.

Alwy. Now vengeance for injustice and oppression!

Sec. Coun. On your own heads, then, be it, miscreant chiefs!

(*They fight round the* King, *his party defend him bravely, till many more* Conspirators *enter, and it is overpowered.*)

Ethw. (*aside, angrily, to* Alwy, *on still seeing the* King *standing in the midst, unhurt, and, with great dignity, the* Seneschal *by his side, and no one offering to attack him.*)
Hast thou forgot? Where are thy chosen men?
Is there no hand to do the needful work?
This is but children's play. (*To some of his party.*)
Come, let us search, that in the neighb'ring chamber
No lurking foe escape. [EXIT *with some* Followers.

Alwy. (*giving a sign to his* Followers, *and going up insolently to the* King.)
Oswal, resign thy sword.

Sen. First take thou mine, thou base, ignoble traitor.

(*Giving* Alwy *a blow with his sword; upon which* Alwy *and his* Followers *fall upon the* King *and the* Seneschal, *and surrounding them on every side, kill them, with many wounds, the crowd gathering so close round them, that their fall cannot be seen.*)

Re-enter ETHWALD, *and the crowd opening on each side shews the dead bodies of the* King *and the* Seneschal.

Ethw. (*affecting surprise.*) What sight is this?
Ah! ye have gone too far. Who did this deed?
Alwy. My followers, much enraged at slight offence,
Did fall upon him.
Ethw. All have their end decreed, and this, alas!
Has been his fated hour.
Come, chiefs and valiant friends, why stand we here
Looking on that which cannot be repair'd?
All honour shall be paid unto the dead.
And, were this deed of any single hand
The willing crime, he should have vengeance too.
But let us now our nightly task fulfil;
Much have we still to do ere morning dawn.
[EXEUNT Ethw. *and* Followers, *and the scene closes.*

SCENE VII.

A royal Apartment: Enter ELBURGA, *with her hair scattered upon her shoulders, and with the action of one in violent grief, followed by* DWINA, *who seems to be soothing her.*

Elb. Cease, cease! thy foolish kindness soothes me not:
My morning is o'ercast; my glory sunk;
Leave me alone to wring my hands and weep.

Dwi. O, no, my princely mistress! grieve not thus!
Over our heads the blackest clouds do pass
And brighter follow them.
Elb. No, no! my sky is night! I was a princess
Almost a queen: in gorgeous pomp beheld,
The public gaze was ever turn'd on me;
Proud was the highest Thane or haughtiest dame
To do my bidding, ev'ry count'nance watch'd
Each changeful glance of my commanding eye
To read its meaning: now my state is changed:
Scoffing and insult and degrading pity
Abide the daughter of a murder'd king.
Heaven's vengeance light upon them all! Begone!
I hate the very light for looking on me!
Begone! and soothe me not!
Dwi. Forgive me, princess; do not thus despair;
King Oswal's daughter many friends will find.
Elb. Friends! hold thy peace! — Oh it doth rend my heart!
I have been wont to talk of subjects, vassals,
Dependants, servants, slaves, but not of friends.
Where shall I hide my head?
Dwi. Surely, dear mistress, with Saint Cuthbert's nuns,
Whose convent by your father's gifts is rich,
You will protection find. There quiet rest,
And holy converse of those pious maids,
After a while will pour into your mind
Soft consolation. (*Putting her hand on* Elburga's *soothingly.*)

Elb. (*pushing her away.*)
Out upon thee, fool! Go, speak thy comforts
To spirits tame and abject as thyself:
They make me mad; they make me thus to tear
My scatter'd locks and strew them to the winds.
(*Tearing her hair distractedly.*)

Enter a Servant.

What brings thee here? (*to* Ser.)

Ser. Ethwald, the king is at the gate, and asks
To be admitted to your presence, princess.

Elb. (*becoming suddenly calm.*)
What, Ethwald, say'st thou! say'st thou truly so?

Ser. Yes, truly, princess.

Elb. Ethwald, that Thane whom thou dost call the king?

Ser. Yes, he whom all the states and chiefs of Mercia
Do call the king.

Elb. He enters not. Tell him I am unwell,
And will not be disturb'd. [Exit Ser.
What seeks he here? Fie, poorly fainting soul!
Rouse! rouse thee up! To all the world beside
Subdued and humbled would I rather be
Than in the eyes of this proud man.

Re-enter Servant.

What say'st thou?
Is he departed?

Ser. No, he will not depart, but bids me say
The entrance he has begg'd he now commands.
I hear his steps behind me.

Enter ETHWALD.

(Elburga *turns away from him proudly.*)

Ethw. Elburga, turn and look upon a friend.

Elb. (*turning round haughtily, and looking on him with an assumed expression of anger and scornful contempt.*)

Usurping rebel, who hast slain thy master;
Take thou a look that well beseems thy worth,
And hie the hence, false traitor!

Ethw. Yes, I will hie me hence, and with me lead
A fair and beauteous subject to my will;
That will which may not be gainsaid. For now
High heaven, that hath decreed thy father's fall,
Hath also me appointed king of Mercia,
With right as fair as his; which I'll maintain,
And by the proudest in this lordly realm
Will be obey'd, even by thy lofty self.

Elb. Put shackles on my limbs, and o'er my head
Let your barr'd dungeons low'r; then may'st thou say,
"Walk not abroad," and so it needs must be:
But think'st thou to subdue, bold as thou art,
The lofty spirit of king Oswal's daughter?
Go, bind the wild winds in thy hollow shield,
And bid them rage no more: they will obey thee.

Ethw. Yes, proud Elburga, I will shackle thee.
But on the throne of Mercia shalt thou sit,
Not in the dungeon's gloom.
Ay, and, albeit the wild winds do refuse
To be subjected to my royal will,

The lofty spirit of king Oswal's daughter
I will subdue. (*Taking her hand.*)
Elb. (*throwing him off from her vehemently.*)
Off with those bloody hands that slew my father!
Thy touch is horrid to me! 'tis a fiend's grasp:
Out from my presence! bloody Thane of Mairneath!
Ethw. Ay, frown on me, Elburga; proudly frown:
I knew thy haughty spirit, and I lov'd it,
Even when I saw thee first in gorgeous state;
When, bearing high thy stately form, thou stoodst
Like a proud queen, and on the gazing crowd,
Somewhat offended with a late neglect,
Darted thy looks of anger and disdain.
High Thanes and Dames shrunk from thine eye, whilst I,
Like one who from the mountain's summit sees,
Beneath him far the harmless lightning play,
With smiling admiration mark'd thee well,
And own'd a kindred soul. Each angry flash
Of thy dark eye was loveliness to me.
But know, proud maid, my spirit outmasters thine,
And heedeth not the anger nor the power
Of living thing.
Elb. Bold and amazing man!
Ethw. And bold should be the man who weds Elburga.
Elb. Away! it cannot be, it shall not be!
My soul doth rise against thee, bloody chief,
And bids thy power defiance.

Ethw. Then art thou mine in truth, for never yet
Did hostile thing confront me unsubdued;
Defy me and thou'rt conquer'd.
Elb. Thou most audacious chief! it shall not be.
Ethw. It shall, it must be, maiden, I have sworn it;
And here repeat it on that beauteous hand
Which to no power but with my life I'll yield.
(*Grasping her hand firmly, which she struggles to free.*)
Frown not, Elburga! 'tis in vain to strive;
My spirit outmasters thine.
Elb. Say'st thou to me thou did'st not slay my father?
Say'st thou those hands are guiltless of his death?
Ethw. Think'st thou I'll plead, and say I have not slain
A weak old man, whose inoffensive mind,
And strong desire to quit the warring world
For quiet religious rest, could be, in truth,
No hindrance to my greatness? were this fitting
In Mercia's king, and proud Elburga's lord?
Elb. (*turning away.*)
Elburga's lord! Thou art presumptuous, prince:
Go hence, and brave me not.
Ethw. I will go hence forthwith; and, by my side,
The fair selected partner of my throne,
I'll lead where the assembled chiefs of Mercia
Wait to receive from me their future queen.
Elb. Distract me not!

Ethw. Resistance is distraction.
Who ever yet my fixed purpose cross'd?
Did Ethwald ever yield? Come, queen of Mercia!
This firm grasp shall conduct thee to a throne:
(*Taking her hand, which she feebly resists.*)
Come forth, the frowning, haughty bride of Ethwald.

Elb. Wonderful man!
If hell or fortune fight for thee I know not,
Nothing withstands thy power.

[EXEUNT Ethw. *leading off* Elb. *in triumph, and* Dwina *following, with her hands and eyes raised to heaven in astonishment.*)

END OF THE FOURTH ACT.

ACT V.

SCENE I. *An arched passage from a gateway in the royal castle. The sound of warlike music without. Enter* ETHELBERT *and* SELRED *with their* Followers, *as if just come from a long march: enter, by the opposite side,* ALWY, *upon which they halt, the foremost of the* Followers *but just appearing under the gateway.*

Alwy. Welcome, most valiant chieftains! Fame reports
That crown'd with full success ye are return'd.
Eth. Good sooth we boast but little of our arms!
Tho' Woggarwolfe, our base ignoble spoiler,
Wounded and sorely shent, we've left behind,
Again in cloister'd walls with ghostly men,
Winding his soul, with many a heavy groan,
Into a saintly frame! God speed the work!
We are but just in time to save our halls.
Sel. It is a shame that such a ruffian thief
Should thus employ the arms of warlike Thanes.
Alwy. In truth it is, but now there reigns in Mercia
A warlike king, who better knows to deal
With valiant men. The messenger inform'd you?

Sel. He did; yet, be it own'd, to call him king
Sounds strangely in our ears. How died king Oswal?

Eth. (*to* Sel.) Patience, my friend! good time will shew thee all.
Yet pray inform us, Alwy, ere we part,
Where is young Edward? In these late commotions
What part had he?

Alwy. Would to the holy saints I could inform you!
Reports there are, incongruous and absurd—
Some say, in hunting from his followers stray'd,
Passing at dusk of eve a high-swoln stream,
Therein he perish'd; others do maintain
That, loathing greatness, he conceals himself
In some lone cave: but, as I bear a heart
True to king Ethwald and the public weal,
I know of him no more.

Sel. Thou liest!

Eth. (*pulling back* Selred.) Peace, art thou mad?

Alwy. (*pretending not to hear.*) What said brave Selred?

Eth. A hasty exclamation of no meaning.

Alwy. I must away, and bear the welcome tidings
Of your arrival to the royal ear.

Eth. But stop, before thou go'st I fain would know
How far'd Elburga in the passing storm?
Where has she refuge found?

Alwy. Within these walls; she is the queen of Mercia.

Eth. I am indebted to thee. [Exit Alwy.

Sel. (*staring with surprise upon* Ethelbert.)
What dost thou think of this? Did we hear truly?
To the usurper of her father's crown,
And if our fears be true, his murd'rer too!
To him! O most unnatural!

Eth. Ay, so it is. As one who ventures forth
After an earthquake's awful visitation,
The country round in strange unwonted guise
Beholds; here swelling heights and herby knolls,
Where smok'd the cottage and the white flocks browz'd,
Sunk into turbid pools; there rifted rocks,
With all their shaggy woods upon their sides,
In the low bosom of the flowery vale
Resting uncouthly — even so does he,
Who looks abroad after the storms of state,
Strange changes see; unnatural and strange.

Sel. It makes my spirit boil — the gentle Edward!
So gently brave!

Eth. Yes, there is cause of grief
And indignation too: but Ethwald reigns,
Howe'er he gain'd his height, and he possesses
The qualities that suit his lofty station.
With them I fear he has his passions also,
Hostile to public good: be it our part
To use the influence we still retain
O'er his ambitious mind for Mercia's weal!
This is our duty now.

Sel. I'll take thy counsel. (*To the* Soldiers.)
Follow, weary comrades.

[EXEUNT Eth. *and* Sel. *and their* Followers, *marching across the stage.*

SCENE II.

A royal Apartment. ELBURGA, *as Queen, discovered sitting on a chair of state, with* DWINA, Ladies, *and* Officers of State *attending.*

Elb. We've waited long: how goes the day?
know'st thou? (*To* First Officer.)
First Offi. As comes the light across this arched roof
From those high windows, it should wear, methinks,
Upon noon-day.
Elb. And the procession to the royal chapel
Should at this hour begin. The king, perchance,
Is with affairs detain'd: go thou and see.

[EXIT First Officer.

I am impatient now. (*Voice heard without.*)
What voice is that?

First SONG without.

Hark! the cock crows, and the wind blows,
Away, my love, away!
Quick, d'on thy weeds and tell thy beads,
For soon it will be day.

First Lad. 'Tis sadly wild.
Dwin. 'Tis sad, but wond'rous sweet.
Who may it be? List, list! she sings again.

Second SONG without.

Where lay'st thou thy careless head?
On the cold heath is my bed.
Where the moor-cock shuts his wing,
And the brown snake weaves his ring.
Safe and fearless will I be,
The coiled adder stings not me.

Elb. (*rising, displeased, from her seat.*)
Call those who wait without. What may this mean?

Enter an Attendant.

Whose voice is that which in a day of joy
Such plaintive music makes?

Atten. Pardon, my royal dame! be not offended!
'Tis a poor maid bereaved of her mind.
Rent are her robes, her scatter'd locks unbound,
Like one who long thro' rugged ways hath stray'd,
Beat with the surly blast; but never yet,
Tho' all so sorely shent, did I behold
A fairer maid. She aims at no despite:
She's wild, but gentle.

Dwi. O hark again!

Third SONG without.

* *Once upon my cheek*
He said the roses grew,
But now they're wash'd away
With the cold ev'ning dew.

* For this third Song, which is the only literary assistance either in verse or prose that I have ever received, I am indebted to the pen of a friend.

For I wander thro' the night,
When all but me take rest,
And the moon's soft beams fall piteously
Upon my troubled breast.

(*A pause.*)

Fourth SONG.

Ah, maiden! bear the biting smart,
Nor thus thy loss deplore;
The Thané's daughter has his heart,
He will return no more.

First Lad. 'Tis strangely melancholy.
Dwi. 'Tis like the mournful sounds which oftentimes
The midnight watcher, in his lonely tower,
Hears with the wailing blast most sweetly mingled,
Elb. (*to* Attendant.) Go thou and lead her hither.
Atten. I will, great queen.—But here she comes unbidden.

Enter BERTHA, *with a wild unsettled air, and her hair scattered upon her shoulders. The* Ladies *gather about her with curiosity.*

First Lad. How fair she is!
Sec. Lad. Her eyes of lovely blue,
Gentle, but restless. Dost thou see that glance?
(*To* Sec. Lad.)
I fear to look upon her.
Dwi. Fie, fie, upon it! press not near her thus;
She seems offended: I will speak to her.
(*To* Berth.) Sweet Lady, art thou sad?

(Bertha *looks steadfastly at her, then drops her head upon her breast, and makes no answer.*)

We would be kind to thee.

(Berth. *then looks more gently on her, but is still silent.*)

First Lad. Dost thou not speak, thou who canst sing so well?

Dwi. Who taught thee those sweet notes?

Berth. The night was dark: I met spirits on my way:

They sung me sweet songs but they were sorrowful.

Dwi. Ah, woe is me! and dost thou wander, then,

In the dark night alone, no one to tend thee?

Berth. When the moon's dark, I follow the night-bird's cry,

And it doth guide my way. — But he'll return,

So do they tell me, when sweet violets blow,

And summer comes again.

Dwi. And who is he?

Berth. List, and the winds will tell thee as they pass:

The stilly air will whisper it. But softly,

Tell it to none again. They must not know

How stern he is, for he was gentle once.

Dwi. A cruel heart had he who could forsake thee!

Ber. (*putting her hand eagerly on* Dwina's *mouth.*)

Hush, hush! we'll not offend him. He is great,

And must not be offended.

Elb. (*coming near her.*) What, say'st thou he is great?
Rent are thy weeds, and thin thy ruffled robe:
Why didst thou leave thy home thus unprotected?
Berth. (*turning hastily upon her.*)
I saw his banner streaming in the air,
And I did follow it.
Elb. His banner in the air! What is thy love?
Berth. (*looking fiercely at her.*)
They say he is a king.
Elb. (*smiling.*) Poor maid! 'tis ever thus with such as she;
They still believe themselves of some high state,
And mimick greatness.
Berth. Thou art a fair dame and a gay—but go;
Take off thine eyes from me; I love thee not.
(*Shrinks from* Elburga, *walking backwards, and looking frowningly at her; then beckoning to* Dwina, *she speaks in her ear.*)
They say a royal dame has won his faith,
Stately and proud. But in a gloomy dream
I heard it first, confused and terrible:
And oft-times, since, the fiend of night repeats it,
As on my pressed breast he sits and groans.
I'll not believe it.
Dwi. What is thy name, sweet Lady?
Berth. (*rubbing her hand across her forehead as if trying to recollect.*)
I had a name that kind friends call'd me by;
And with a blessing did the holy man
Bestow it on me. But I've wander'd far

Thro' wood and wilds, and strangely on my head
The 'numbing winds have beat, and I have lost it.
Be not offended with me ——
For, Lady, thou art gentle and I fear thee.
(*Bowing submissively to* Dwina.)

Enter ETHELBERT.

Eth. (*to* Dwina, *after looking at* Bertha.)
What maid is that so haggard and so wild?
Dwi. A wand'ring maniac, but so fair and gentle
Thou needs must speak to her.
Eth. (*going up to* Berth.) Fair Lady, wilt thou suffer — gracious heaven!
What see I here! the sweet and gentle Bertha!
Ah, has it come to this! alas, alas!
Sweet maiden dost thou know me?
Berth. (*after looking earnestly at him.*)
I know thee well enough. They call thee mad;
Thy wild and raving words oft made the ears
Of holy men to tingle.
Eth. She somewhat glances at the truth. Alas!
I've seen her gay and blooming as the rose,
And cheerful, too, as song of early lark.
I've seen her prattle on her nurse's lap,
Innocent bud! and now I see her thus. (*Weeps.*)
Berth. Ah! dost thou weep? are they unkind to thee? (*Shaking her head.*)
Yes, yes! from out the herd, like a mark'd deer,
They drive the poor distraught. The storms of heaven
Beat on him: gaping hinds stare at his woe;
And no one stops to bid heav'n speed his way.

Eth. (*flourish of trumpets.*) Sweet maid, retire.

Berth. Nay, nay! I will not go: there be without
Those who will frown upon me.

Eth. (*endeavouring to lead her off.*)
I pray thee be entreated!

(Dwina *takes hold of her also to lead her off, but she breaks from them furiously.*)

Berth. Ye shall not force me! Wist ye who I am?
The whirlwind in its strength contends with me,
And I o'ermaster it.

Eth. Stand round her, then, I pray you, gentle ladies!
The king must not behold her.

(*The* Ladies *gather round* Bertha, *and conceal her.*)

Enter Ethwald, *followed by* Thanes *and* Attendants.

Ethw. (*after returning the obeisance of the assembly.*)
This gay and fair attendance on our person
And on our queen, most honour'd lords and dames,
We much regard; and could my heart express—

(Bertha, *hearing his voice, shrieks out.*)

What cry is that?

Dwi. Regard it not: it is a wand'ring maid,
Distracted in her mind, who is in search,
As she conceits it, of some faithless lover.
She sings sweet songs of wildest harmony,
And at the queen's command we led her in.

Ethw. Seeking her love! distracted in her mind!
Have any of my followers wrong'd her? Speak!
If so it be, by righteous heaven I swear!
The man, whoe'er he be, shall dearly rue it.

(Bertha *shrieks again, and, breaking through the crowd, runs up to* Ethwald. *He starts back, and covers his eyes with one hand, whilst she, catching hold of the other, presses it to her breast.*)

Berth. I've found thee now, and let the black fiend growl,
I will not part with thee. I've follow'd thee
Thro' crag and moor and wild. I've heard thy voice
Sound from the dark hill's side, and follow'd thee.
I've seen thee on the gath'ring twilight clouds,
Ride with the stately spirits of the storm.
But thou look'dst sternly on me.
O be not angry! I will kneel to thee;
For thou art glorious now, as I am told,
And must have worship. (*kneeling, and bowing her head meekly to the ground.*)

Ethw. (*turning away.*) O God! O God! Where art thou, Ethelbert?
Thou might'st have saved me this.

(*Looking round, and seeing that* Ethelbert *weeps, he also becomes softened, and turns to* Bertha *with great emotion.*)

Berth. They say she's fair and glorious: woe is me!
I am but form'd as simple maidens are.

But scorn me not; I have a powerful spell,
A Druid gave it me, which on mine arm
When once enclasp'd, will make me fair as she;
So thou wilt turn to me.

Ethw. O Ethelbert! I pray thee pity me!
This sight doth move me, e'en to agony.
Remove her hence; but O deal gently with her!

(Ethelbert *endeavours again to lead her off, and the* Ladies *crowd about her. She is then carried out, and is heard to scream as they are carrying her.*)

Ethw. (*in great disorder.*) Come, come away! we do but linger here.

(Elburga, *who, since* Ethwald's *entering, has remained in the back ground, but agitated with passions, now advances angrily to him.*)

Elb. So thou hast known this maid?

Ethw. Fie! speak not to me now.

Elb. Away, away!
Thou hast lodged softer passions in thy breast
Than I have reckon'd on.

Ethw. (*shaking her off.*) Fie! turn thy face aside, and shade thine eyes!
That no soft passion in thy bosom lives,
Is thy opprobrium, woman, and thy shame.

Elb. There are within my breast such thoughts, I trust,
As suit my lofty state.

Ethw. (*aside to* Elb.) Go, heartless pageant, go
Lead on thy senseless shew, and move me not
To do thee some despite.

(*Aloud to the* Ladies.) Move on, fair dames.
(*To* Elb. *who seems unwilling to go.*)
The king commands it.
[EXEUNT Elburga *and* Ladies.

First Offi. (*to* Ethw. *who stands with his eyes fixed on the ground.*)
Please you, my Lord, but if you move not also,
The ceremony will, in sooth, appear
As marr'd and cut in twain.

Ethw. What say'st thou, marshal?

First Offi. Please you, my Lord, to move?

Ethw. Ay, thou say'st well: in the soul's agony
A meaner man might turn aside and weep.

[EXEUNT Ethw. *with part of his train, the others ranging themselves in order to follow him. A great confusion and noise is then heard without, and a voice calling out "The king is wounded." The crowd press back again in disorder, and presently re-enter* ETHW. *supported.*

First Offi. My Lord, how is it with you?

Ethw. I fear but ill, my friend. Where is the man
That gave me this fell stroke?

First Offi. I cannot tell: they have surrounded him.

Enter Second Officer.

Sec. Offi. He is secured.

Ethw. Is it a Mercian hand?

Sec. Offi. It is, my Lord, but of no high degree.
It is the frantic stroke of a poor groom,

Who did his late Lord love; and, for that crime,
Last night, with wife and children weeping round
him,
Was by your soldiers turn'd into the cold,
Houseless and bare.

Ethw. Curse on their ruffian zeal!
Torment him not, but let him die in peace.
Would I might say—. I'm very faint, my friends:
Support me hence, I pray you!

[EXEUNT Ethw. *supported.*

SCENE III.

A royal apartment: an open door in front, shewing an inner chamber, in which is discovered ETHWALD *lying upon a couch, and surrounded with the* Thanes *and* Officers *of his court,* SELRED *and* ETHELBERT *standing on each side of him.*

Sel. (*after* Ethw. *has said something to him in a low voice.*)
He is too much inclosed and longs for air:
He'll breathe more freely in the outer chamber,
Let us remove him.

(*They lift him in his couch, and bring him forward to the front of the stage.*)

First Offi. How are you now, my Lord?

Ethw. Somewhat exhausted; and albeit, good
Thanes,
I greatly am indebted to your love,
For a short space I fain would be alone.

First Offi. Farewell! God send your highness rest! meantime
We'll pray for your recovery.
Sec Offi. And heaven will hear our prayers.
Omnes. Amen, amen!
Ethw. Pray heaven to order all things for the weal
Of my good realm, and I shall be well pleased
To live or die. Adieu! [EXEUNT *all but* Ethw. Selred, *and* Ethelbert. (*After a pause, in which* Ethw. *seems agitated and uneasy.*)
My dearest Selred, think it not unkind,
But go thou too. [EXIT Selred.
(*Raising himself on the couch, and taking both the hands of* Ethelbert, *which he presses in his, looking up in his face expressively for some time before he speaks.*)
I am oppress'd. To them, even in this state,
I still must be a king: to you, my friend,
Let me put off all seeming and constraint,
And be a poor weak man. (*A pause.*) Thou speakest not,
Thy face is sad and solemn. Well I see
Thou look'st upon me as a dying wretch —
There is no hope.
Eth. Much will it profit thee
To be prepared as tho' there were no hope;
For if thou liv'st thou'lt live a better man,
And if thou diest, may heaven accept it of thee!
Ethw. O that it would! But, my good Ethelbert,
To be thus seized in my high career,

With all my views of glory op'ning round me—
The Western state ev'n now invites mine arms.
And half Northumberland, in little time,
Had been to Mercia join'd.

Eth. Nay, think not now, I pray thee, of these matters!

They mix uncouthly with the pious thoughts
That do become your state.

Ethw. I know it well;
But they do press so closely on my heart——
O I did think to be remembered long!
Like those grand visitations of the earth,
That on its alter'd face for ages leave
The traces of their might. Alas, alas!
I am a powerful, but a passing storm,
That soon shall be forgotten!

Eth. I do beseech thee think of better things!

Ethw. Thou see'st I weep.—Before thee I may weep. (*Dropping his head upon his breast, and groaning deeply.*)

Long have I toil'd and stain'd my hands in blood
To gain pre-eminence; and now, alas!
Newly arrived at this towering height,
With all my schemes of glory rip'ning round me,
I close mine eyes in darkness, and am nothing.

Eth. What, nothing say'st thou?

Ethw. O no, Ethelbert!
I look beyond this world, and look with dread
Where all for me is fearful and unknown.
Death I have daily braved in fields of fight,

And, when a boy, oft on the air-hung bough
I've fearless trode, beneath me roaring far
The deep swoln floods with every erring step
Instant destruction. Had I perish'd then —
Would that I had, since it is come to this!

(*Raising up his hands vehemently to heaven.*)

Eth. Be not so vehement: this will endanger
The little chance thou still may'st have for life.
The God we fear is merciful.

Ethw. Ay, he is merciful; but may it reach —
O listen to me! — Oswal I have murder'd,
And Edward, brave and gentle — Ay, this bites
With a fell tooth! I vilely have enthrall'd;
Of all his rights deprived. The loving Bertha:
Too well thou know'st what I have been to her —
Ah! thinkest thou a thousand robed priests
Can pray down mercy on a soul so foul?

Eth. The inward sighs of humble penitence
Rise to the ear of heav'n when peeled hymns
Are scatter'd with the sounds of common air;
If I indeed may speak unto a king
Of low humility.

Ethw. Thy words bite keenly, friend. O king me not!
Grant me but longer life, and thou shalt see
What brave amends I'll make for past offences.
Thou thinkest hardly of me; ne'ertheless,
Rough as my warrior's life has been, good thoughts
Have sometimes harbour'd here.

(*Putting his hand on his heart.*)

If I had lived,

It was my full intent that, in my power,
My people should have found prosperity:
I would have proved to them a gen'rous Lord.
If I had lived—— Ah! think'st thou, Ethelbert,
There is indeed no hope?

Eth. I may not flatter you.

Ethw. (*holding up his clasped hands.*)
Then heaven have mercy on a guilty soul!
Good Ethelbert, full well thou know'st that I
No coward am: from power of mortal thing
I never shrunk. O might I still contend
With spear and helm, and shield and brandish'd blade!
But I must go where spear and helm and shield
Avail not:
Where the skill'd warrior, cas'd in iron, stands
Defenceless as the poor uncrusted worm.
Some do conceit that disembodied spirits
Have in them more capacity of woe
Than flesh and blood maintain. I feel appall'd:
Yes, Thane of Sexford, I do say appall'd.
For, ah! thou know'st not in how short a space
The soul of man within him may be changed.

Ethw. I know it all too well. But be more calm;
Thou hast a task to do, and short perhaps
May be the time allow'd thee. True repentance
With reparation of offences past
Is ever yok'd. Declare it as thy will
That Edward do succeed unto his rights:
And for poor Bertha, she shall be my charge;
I'll tend and cheer her in my quiet home.

Ethw. Thou dost prevent my boon: heaven bless thee for it!
I give thee power to do what'er thou think'st
I living should have done, 'Tis all I can,
And gracious heaven accept it at my hands!
Eth. Amen, my friend! I'll faithfully fulfil
Th' important trust—Ha! how thy visage changes!
Thy mind's exertion has outrun thy strength.
He faints away. Help! who attends without?

Enter SELRED *with* Attendants.

Support the king: whether a sudden faint
Or death be now upon him, trow I not,
But quickly call the queen.
Sel. Alas, my brother!
(*Assisting* Eth. *to raise* Ethw.*'s head.*)
Eth. Raise him gently, Selred.
For, if that life within him still remain,
It may revive him.
Sel. Ah, see how changed he is! Alas, my brother!
Pride of my father's house, is this thy end?

Enter ELBURGA, Nobles, &c.

Elb. Let me approach unto my royal Lord.
Good Ethelbert, thou long hast known thy king,
Look'd he e'er thus before? (*looking on* Ethw.)
Eth. No, royal dame; and yet 'tis but a faint;
See, he revives again.
Ethw. (*opening his eyes.*) Who are about me now?
Eth. The queen and nobles.

Sel. And Selred, too, is here, my dearest Ethwald!

Ethw. (*holding out his hand to* Sel.)
Ay, noble brother, thou wert ever kind.
Faintness returns again; stand round my friends,
And hear my dying words. It is my will
That Ethelbert shall, after my decease,
With the concurrence of the nation's council,
The kingdom settle as may best appear
To his experienced wisdom, and retain
Until that settlement the kingly power.
Faintness returns again; I say no more.
Art thou displeas'd, my Selred?

Sel. (*kneeling and kissing his hand.*)
No, brother, let your dying will bereave me
Ev'n of my father's lands, and with my sword
I will maintain it.

Ethw. Thou art a gen'rous brother; fare thee well!

Elb. What, is the queen, indeed, so poor a thing
In Mercia's state, that she o'erpassed is,
Unhonour'd and unmention'd?

Ethw. (*to* Elb. *waving his hand faintly.*)
Be at peace!
Thou 'shalt have all things that become thy state.
(*To* Attendants.) Lower my head, I pray you.

First Offi. He faints again.

Sec. Offi. He will not hold it long:
The kingdom will be torn with dire contentions.
And the Northumbrian soon will raise his head.

Ethw. (*raising himself eagerly with great vehemence.*)
Northumberland! Oh I did purpose soon,
With thrice five thousand of my chosen men,
To've compass'd his proud towers.
Death, death! thou art at hand, and all is ended!
(*Groans, and falls back upon the couch.*)
Frst Offi. This is a faint from which I fear, brave Thanes,
He will awake no more.
Sec. Offi. Say'st thou? go nearer and observe the face.
First Offi. If that mine eyes did ever death behold,
This is a dead man's visage.
Sec. Offi. Let us retire. My good Lord Ethelbert,
You shall not find me backward in your service.
First Offi. Nor me.
Omnes. Nor any of us.
Eth. I thank you, Thanes! 'Tis fit you should retire;
But Selred and myself, and, of your number,
Two chosen by yourselves, will watch the body.
(*To* Dwina, *who supports* Elburga, *and seems soothing her.*)
Ay, gentle Dwina, soothe your royal mistress,
And lead her hence.
(*After looking stedfastly on the body.*)
Think ye, indeed, that death hath dealt his blow?

First Offi. Ah, yes, my Lord! that countenance
is death.

(Selred *kneels by the body, and hides his head.*)

Eth. Then peace be to his spirit!
A brave and daring soul is gone to rest.
Thus powerful death th' ambitious man arrests,
In midst of all his great and towering hopes,
With heart high swoln; as the omnipotent frost
Seizes the rough enchafed northern deep,
And all its mighty billows, heav'd aloft,
Boldly commixing with the clouds of heaven,
Are fix'd to rage no more.

(*The Curtain drops.*)

ETHWALD:

A TRAGEDY,

IN FIVE ACTS.

PART SECOND.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

MEN:

ETHWALD.
ETHELBERT.
SELRED.
EDWARD.
ALWY.
HEREULF.
HEXULF.
ONGAR.

Thanes, Soldiers, &c. &c.

WOMEN:

ELBURGA.
DWINA.

Ladies, Attendants, &c. &c.

ETHWALD.

ACT I.

SCENE I. *A gloomy apartment in an old Saxon castle, with small grated windows very high from the ground.* EDWARD *is discovered, sitting by a table, and tracing figures with chalk upon it, which he frequently rubs out again; at last, throwing away the chalk, he fixes his eyes upon the ground, and continues for some time in a melancholy musing posture. Enters to him the* Keeper, *carrying something in his hand.*

EDWARD.

WHAT brings thee now? it surely cannot be
The time of food: my prison hours are wont
To fly more heavily.

Keep. It is not food: I bring wherewith, my Lord,
To stop a rent in these old walls, that oft
Hath griev'd me, when I've thought of you o'nights;
Thro' it the cold wind visits you.

Ed. And let it enter! it shall not be stopp'd.
Who visits me besides the winds of heaven?
Who mourns with me but the sad sighing wind?
Who bringeth to mine ear the mimick'd tones
Of voices once belov'd and sounds long past
But the light-wing'd and many voiced wind?
Who fans the prisoner's lean and fever'd cheek
As kindly as the monarch's wreathed brows
But the free piteous wind?
I will not have it stopp'd.

Keep. My Lord, the winter now creeps on apace:
Hoar frost this morning, on our shelter'd fields
Lay thick, and glanced to the up-risen sun,
Which scarce had power to melt it.

Ed. Glanced to th' up-risen sun! Ay, such fair morns,
When ev'ry bush doth put its glory on,
Like to a gemmed bride! Your rustics, now,
And early hinds, will set their clouted feet
Thro' silver webs, so bright and finely wrought
As royal dames ne'er fashion'd, yet plod on
Their careless way, unheeding.
Alas, how many glorious things there be
To look upon! Wear not the forests, now,
Their latest coat of richly varied dyes?

Keep. Yes, good my Lord, the cold chill year advances,
Therefore, I pray you, let me close that wall.

Ed. I tell thee no, man; if the north air bites,
Bring me a cloak.—Where is thy dog to-day?

Keep. Indeed I wonder that he came not with me
As he is wont.
Ed. Bring him, I pray thee, when thou com'st again.
He wags his tail and looks up to my face
With the assured kindliness of one
Who has not injur'd me. How goes your sport?
Keep. Nobly, my Lord; and much it pleases me
To see your mind again so sooth'd and calm.
Ed. I thank thee: know'st thou not that man is form'd
For varied states; to top the throne of power,
Or in a toad's hole squat, shut from the light?
He can bear all things; yet, if thou hast grace,
Lead me for once into the open air
To see the woods, and fields, and country round,
In the fair light of heaven.
Keep. I must not do it; I am sworn to this;
But all indulgence, suited to this state
Of close confinement, gladly will I grant.
Ed. A faithful servant to a wicked lord,
Whoe'er he be, art thou. Is Oswal dead?
Or does some powerful Thane his power usurp?
(*A pause.*)
Thou wilt not answer me. (*A horn heard without.*)
Keep. Ha! who is at the gate that sounds so boldly?
I'll mount this tower and see.
[EXIT *hastily, and* Edward *takes his seat again as before.*

Keep. (*without, calling down from the Tower.*)
It is a company of armed men,
Bearing a royal ensign.

Ed. (*starting from his seat.*) Then let me rise
and brace my spirits up!
They bring me death or freedom!

Re-enter Keeper *from the Tower.*

(*Eagerly to him.*) What think'st thou of it?

Keep. I'll to the gate, and meet them instantly.
[EXIT, *crossing over the stage hastily.*

Ed. (*alone.*) An it be death they'll do it
speedily,
And there's the end of all. Ah, liberty!
An it be thou, enlarger of man's self!—
My heart doth strangely beat as tho' it were.
I hear their steps already: they come quickly:
Ah! how step they who joyful tidings bear!

Keep. (*calling without to* Edw. *before they enter.*)
My Lord, my Lord! you're a free man again!

Ed. Am I? great God of heaven, how good
thou art!

Enter Two Thanes, *conducted by the* Keeper.

Ed. (*accosting them.*) Brave men, ye come
upon a blessed errand,
And let me bless you.

First Th. With joy unto ourselves we bring,
my Lord,
Your full enlargement from the highest power
That Mercia now obeys.

Ed. Not from king Oswal?

Sec. Th. No, most noble Ethling;
From the Lord Regent Ethelbert we come.
Ed. Mine uncle, then, is dead.
Sec. Th. E'en so, my Lord.
Ed. Ah! good and gentle, and to me most kind! (*Weeps, hiding his face.*)
Died he peacefully?
First Th. He is at peace.
Ed. Ye are reserv'd with me.
But ye are wise, perhaps; time will declare it.
Give me your hands; ye are my loving friends.
And you, good guardian of this castle, too,
You have not been to me a surly keeper.
(*Taking the* Thanes *warmly by the hand, and afterwards the* Keeper.)
(*A second horn sounds without very loud.*)
First Th. Ha! at our heels another messenger
So quickly sent. [EXIT Keep.
Sec. Th. What may this mean?
Ed. Nay, wait not for him here.
Let us go forth from these inclosing walls,
And meet him in the light and open day.
First Th. 'Tis one, I hope, sent to confirm our errand:
How came he on so quickly?
Ed. Thou hopest, Thane? Oh! then thou doubtest too. (*Pauses and looks earnestly in their faces.*)

Enter ONGAR, *conducted by the* Keeper.

First Th. (*to* Ongar.) Thine errand?

Ongar. That thou shalt know, and the authority
Which warrants it. You here are come, grave Thanes,
Upon the word of a scarce-named regent,
To set this pris'ner free; but I am come
With the sign'd will of Ethwald to forbid it:
And here I do retain him. (*Laying hold of* Edw.)
First Th. Loose thy unhallow'd grasp, thou base deceiver!
Nor face us out with a most wicked tale.
We left the king at his extremity,
And long ere this he must have breath'd his last.
Ongar. Art thou in league with death to know so well
When he perforce must come to sick men's beds?
King Ethwald lives, and will live longer too
Than traitors wish for. Look upon these orders:
Knowest thou not his sign? (*shewing his warrant.*)
(*Both* Thanes *after reading it.*) 'Tis wonderful!
Ongar. Is it so wonderful
A wounded man, fainting with loss of blood
And rack'd with pain, should seem so near his end,
And yet recover?
Sec. Th. Ethwald then lives?
Ongar. Ay, and long live the king!
Ed. What words are these?
I am as one who in a misty dream,
Listens to things wild and fantastical,
Which no congruity nor kindred bear

To preconceiv'd impressions.
King Ethwald, said ye? and is Ethwald king?
First Th. He did succeed your uncle.
Ed. And by his orders am I here detain'd?
First Th. Even so, my Lord.
Ed. It cannot be. (*Turning to* Sec. Th.) Thou say'st not so, good Thane?
Sec. Th. I do believe it.
Ed. Nay, nay; ye are deceived.
(*Turning to* Ongar.) What say'st thou?
Was I by Ethwald's orders here imprison'd?
Ongar. Yes, yes; who else had power or will to do it?
Ed. (*holding his clasp'd hands.*) Then hope, farewell!
My gleam is dark; my rest is in the dust!
O that an enemy had done this wrong!
But Ethwald, thou who to my heart wert press'd
As dearest brother never was by him
Who shar'd his mother's breast! Thou in whose fame
I gloried — I who spoke not of my own! —
When shouting crowds proclaimed thy honour'd name,
I ever join'd with an ungrudging heart:
Yea, such true kindred feeling bore I to him,
E'en at his praise I wept. I pray you, sirs!
(*Bursting into tears.*) This hath overcome me.
Ongar. (*to* Thanes.) Why do you tarry here? You've seen my warrant.
Depart with me and leave the prisoner.

First Th. What, shall we leave him in this piteous state,
Lone and uncomforted?

Ongar. It must be so, there is no time to lose.
Come, follow me; my men are at the gate.

(*As they are all about to depart,* Edward, *starting furiously forward to the door, flies upon* Ongar, *and seizes him by the throat.*)

Ed. What! leave me here, fiend! Am I not a man,
Created free to breathe the circling air
And range the boundless earth as thy base self,
Or thy more treach'rous lord? thou tyrant's slave!

(*As he struggles with him,* Ongar *calls loudly, and immediately the apartment is filled with armed men, who separate them.*)

Ongar. (*to his* Followers.) Remove that madman to the inner chamber.
Keeper, attend your duty. (*To the* Thanes.) Follow me. [EXEUNT Ongar *and* Thanes, &c.

Keep. (*to* Edw. *as some remaining armed men are leading him off by the opposite side.*)
Alas! alas! my Lord, to see you thus,
In closer bondage! Pray! good soldiers, pray!
Let him in this apartment still remain:
He'll be secure; I'll pledge my life——

Ed. No, no!
Let them enchain me in a pitchy gulph!
'Twere better than this den of weariness
Which my soul loathes. What care I now for ease? [EXEUNT Ed. *led off by the men.*

SCENE II.

An apartment in the royal castle. Enter ETHELBERT *meeting with* SELRED, *who enters at the same time from a door at the bottom of the stage.*

Eth. How did'st thou leave the King?

Sel. Recovering strength with every passing hour.

His spirits too, that were so weak and gloomy,
From frequent fainting and the loss of blood,
Now buoyant rise, and much assist the cure
Which all regard as wonderful.

Eth. It has deceiv'd us, yet I've heard of such.

Sel. Thou lookest sadly on it: how is this?
With little cost of thought I could explain
In any man but thee that cloudy brow;
But well I know thou didst not prize the power
With which thou wert invested.

Eth. Selred, this hasty gloom will prove too short
To work in Ethwald's mind the change we look'd for.
And yet he promis'd well.

Sel. Ay, and will well perform; mistrust him not.
I must confess, nature has form'd his mind
Too restless and aspiring; and of late,
Having such mighty objects in his grasp,
He has too reckless been of others' rights.
But, now that all is gain'd, mistrust him not:
He'll prove a noble king; a good one too.

Eth. Thou art his brother.

Sel. And thou his friend.

Eth. I stand reprov'd before thee.
A friend, indeed, should gentler thoughts maintain,
And so I will endeavour.

Sel. Give me thy valiant hand; full well I know
The heart which it pertains to.

Eth. I hear him, now, within his chamber stir.

Sel. Thou'lt move him best alone. God speed thy zeal!
I'll stand by thee the while and mark his eye.

(Eth. *remains on the front of the stage whilst* Ethwald *enters behind him from the door at the bottom of the stage, leaning upon an attendant.*)

Ethw. (*to* Sel. *as he goes up to* Eth.)
How, Ethelbert, our friend, so deep in thought?
(*To the* Attendant.) Leave me awhile, methinks a brother's arm
Will be a kindlier staff.

[Exit Attendant, *and he leans upon* Sel.
How, Ethelbert, my friend!
What vision from the nether world of sprites
Now rises to thine eyes, thus on the ground
So fix'd and sternly bent?

Eth. Pardon, my Lord! my mind should now be turn'd
To cheerful thoughts, seeing you thus restor'd.
How fares it with you?

Ethw. E'en as with one, on a rude mountain's side,
Who suddenly in seeming gloom inclosed

Of drizzly night, athwart the wearing mist
Sees the veil'd sun break forth in heaven's wide arch.
And shewing still a lengthen'd day before him.
As with a trav'ller in a gloomy path,
Whose close o'er-shaded end did scare his fancy
With forms of hidden ill; who, wending on
With fearful steps, before his eyes beholds
I' th' sudden burst a fair and wide expanse
Of open country, rich in promis'd good.
As one o'erwhelmed in the battle's shock,
Who, all oppress'd and number'd with the slain,
Smother'd and lost, with sudden impulse strengthen'd,
Shakes the foul load of dead men from his back,
And finds himself again standing erect,
Unmaim'd and vigorous. As one who stood —
But it may tire thee with such ample scope
To tell indeed how it doth fare with me.

Eth. You truly are from a dark gloom restor'd
To cheerful day; and, if the passing shade
Has well impress'd your mind, there lies before you
A prospect fair, indeed. Ay, fairer far
Than that the gloom obscured.

Ethw. How sayest thou?

Eth. Did not that seeming cloud of death obscure
To your keen forecast eye tumultuous scenes
Of war and strife, and conquest yet to come,
Bought with your people's blood? but now, my Ethwald,

Your chasten'd mind, so rich in good resolves,
Hath stretch'd before it, future prospect fair,
Such as a God might please.
Ethw. How so, good Ethelbert?
Eth. And dost thou not perceive? O see before thee
Thy native land, freed from the ills of war
And hard oppressive power, a land of peace!
Where yellow fields unspoil'd, and pastures green,
Mottled with herds and flocks, who crop secure
Their native herbage, nor have ever known
A stranger's stall, smile gladly.
See, thro' its tufted alleys to heaven's roof
The curling smoke of quiet dwellings rise;
Whose humble masters, with forgotten spear
Hung on the webbed wall, and cheerful face
In harvest fields embrown'd, do gaily talk
Over their ev'ning meal, and bless king Ethwald,
The valiant, yet the peaceful, whose wise rule,
Firm and rever'd, has brought them better days
Than e'er their fathers knew.
Ethw. A scene, indeed, fair and desirable;
But, ah, how much confin'd! Were it not work
A God befitting, with exerted strength,
By one great effort to enlarge its bounds,
And spread the blessing wide?
Eth. (*starting back from him.*)
Ha! there it is! that serpent bites thee still!
O spurn it, strangle it! let it rise no more!

Sel. (*laying his hand affectionately on* Ethwald's *breast.*)
My dearest brother, let not such wild thoughts
Again possess your mind!
Ethw. Go to! go to! (*to* Sel.) But, Ethelbert, thou'rt mad. (*Turning angrily to* Eth.)
Eth. Not mad, my royal friend, but something griev'd
To see your restless mind still bent on that
Which will to you no real glory bring,
And to your hapless people many woes.
Ethw. Thou greatly errest from my meaning, friend.
As truly as thyself I do regard
My people's weal, and will employ the power
Heaven trusts me with, for that important end.
But were it not ignoble to confine
In narrow bounds the blessed power of blessing,
Lest, for a little space, the face of war
Should frown upon us? He who will not give
Some portion of his ease, his blood, his wealth,
For others' good, is a poor frozen churl.
Eth. Well, then again a simple warriour be,
And thine own ease, and blood, and treasure give:
But whilst thou art a king, and would'st bestow
On people not thine own the blessed gift
Of gentle rule, earn'd by the public force
Of thine own subjects, thou dost give away
That o'er the which thou hast no right. Frown not:
I will assert it, crown'd and royal Lord,
Tho' to your ears full rude the sound may be.

Ethw. Chaf'd Thane, be more restrain'd. Thou knowest well,
That, as a warlike chieftain, never yet
The meanest of my soldiers grasp'd his spear
To follow me constrain'd; and as a King,
Think'st thou I'll be less noble?

Sel. Indeed, good Ethelbert, thou art too warm;
Thou dealest hardly with him.

Eth. I know, tho' peace dilates the heart of man,
And makes his stores increase, his count'nance smile,
He is by nature form'd, like savage beasts,
To take delight in war.
'Tis a strong passion in his bosom lodged,
For ends most wise, curb'd and restrain'd to be;
And they who for their own designs do take
Advantage of his nature, act in truth,
Like cruel hinds who spirit the poor cock
To rend and tear his fellow.
O thou! whom I so often in my arms,
A bold and gen'rous boy have fondly press'd,
And now do proudly call my sov'reign lord,
Be not a cruel master! O be gentle!
Spare Mercian blood! Goodness and power do make
Most meet companions. The great Lord of all,
Before whose awful presence, short-while since,
Thou did'st expect to stand, almighty is,
Also most merciful:
And the bless'd Being he to earth did send
To teach our soften'd hearts to call him Father,

Most meekly did confine his heavenly power
Unto the task assign'd him. Think of this.
O! dost thou listen to me?

Ethw. (*moved and softened.*)
Yes, good Ethelbert.
Be thou more calm: we will consider of it.
We should desire our people's good, and peace
Makes them to flourish. We confess all this;
But circumstance oft takes away the power
Of acting on it. Still our Western neighbours
Are turbulent and bold; and, for the time,
Tho' somewhat humbled, they again may rise
And force us to the field.

Sel. No, fear it not! they are inclin'd to peace;
Tidings I've learnt, sent by a trusty messenger,
Who from Caernarvon is with wond'rous speed
But just arriv'd: their valiant prince is dead.
A sudden death has snatch'd him in his prime;
And a weak infant, under tutorage
Of three contending chiefs of little weight,
Now rules the state, whom, thou may'st well perceive,
Can give thee no disturbance.

Ethw. (*eagerly, with his eyes lightening up, and his whole frame agitated.*)
A trusty messenger has told thee this?
O send him to me quickly! still fair fortune
Offers her favours freely. Send him quickly!
Ere yet aware of my returning health,
Five thousand men might without risk be led
E'en to their castle walls.

Eth. What, mean'st thou this?

Uprous'd again unto this dev'lish pitch?
Oh, it is horrid!

Ethw. (*in great heat.*) Be restrained, Thane.

Eth. Be thou restrained, king. See how thou art,
Thus feebly tott'ring on those wasted limbs!
And would'st thou spoil the weak? (*Observing* Ethw. *who staggers from being agitated beyond his strength.*)

Ethw. (*pushing away* Selred *who supports him.*)
I do not want thine aid: I'm well and vig'rous:
My heart beats strongly, and my blood is warm;
Tho' there are those who spy my weakness out
To shackle me withal. Ho, thou without!

Enter his Attendant, *and* Ethw. *taking hold of him, walks across the stage; then turning about to* Sel. *and* Eth.

Brother, send quickly for your trusty messenger;
And so good day. Good morning, Thane of Sexford. (*Looking sternly to* Ethelbert.)

Eth. Good morning, Mercia's king.

[EXEUNT *by opposite sides, frowningly.*

SCENE III.

A grand apartment, with a chair of state. Enter HEXULF *and* ALWY, *engaged in close conversation.*

Alwy. (*continuing to speak.*) Distrust it not;
The very honours and high exaltation
Of Ethelbert, that did your zealous ire

So much provoke, are now the very tools
With which we'll work his ruin.

Hex. But still proceed with caution; gain the queen;
For she, from ev'ry hue of circumstance,
Must be his enemy.

Alwy. I have done that already.
By counterfeiting Ethwald's signature
Whilst in that still and deathlike state he lay,
To hinder Ethelbert's rash treach'rous haste
From setting Edward free, I have done that
For which, tho' Ethwald thanks me, I must needs,
On bended knee, for courtly pardon sue.
The queen I have address'd with humble suit
My cause to plead with her great Lord, and she
Her most magnificent and high protection
Be of our party, e'en if on her mind
No other motive press'd.

Hex. I doubt it not, and yet I fear her spirit,
Proud and aspiring, will desire to rule
More than befits our purpose.

Alwy. Fear it not.
It is the shew and worship of high state
That she delights in more than real power:
She has more joy in stretching forth her hand
And saying, "I command," than, in good truth,
Seeing her will obey'd.

Enter QUEEN, *with* DWINA *and* Attendants.

Hex. Saint Alban bless you, high and royal dame!
We are not here, in an intruding spirit,
Before your royal presence.

Qu. I thank you, good lord bishop, with your friend.
And nothing doubt of your respect and duty.
Alwy. Thanks, gracious queen! This good and holy man
Thus far supports me in your royal favour,
Which is the only rock that I would cling to,
Willing to give me friendly countenance.
Qu. You have done well, good Alwy, and have need
Of thanks more than of pardon; nevertheless,
If any trouble light on thee for this,
A royal hand shall be stretch'd forth to save you,
Whom none in Mercia, whosoe'er they be,
Will venture to oppose. I will protect thee,
And have already much inclin'd the king
To favour thee.
Alwy. (*kneeling and kissing her hand.*)
Receive my humble thanks, most honour'd queen.
My conscience tells me I have merited,
Of you and of the king, no stern rebuke;
But that dark cunning Thane has many wiles
To warp men's minds e'en from their proper good.
He has attempted, or report speaks falsely,
To lure king Ethwald to resign his crown.
What may he not attempt! it makes me shrink!
He trusts his treasons to no mortal men:
Fiends meet him in his hall at dead of night,
And are his counsellors.
Queen. (*holding up her hands.*)
Protect us, heaven!

Hex. Saint Alban will protect you, gracious queen.
Trust me, his love for pious Oswal's daughter
Will guard you in the hour of danger. Hark!
The king approaches. (*Flourish of trumpets.*)
Qu. Yes, at this hour he will receive in state
The bold address of those seditious Thanes,
Clam'ring for peace, when fair occasion smiles,
And beckons him to arm and follow her.
Hex. We know it well; of whom Thane Ethelbert,
In secret is the chief, although young Hereulf
By him is tutor'd in the spokesman's office.

Enter ETHWALD, *attended by many* Thanes *and* Officers *of the Court, &c.*

Qu. (*presenting* Alwy *to* Ethw.) My Lord, a humble culprit at your feet,
Supported by my favour, craves forgiveness.
(Alwy *kneels, and* Ethw. *raises him graciously.*)
Ethw. I grant his suit, supported by the favour
Of that warm sense I wear within my breast
Of his well-meaning zeal. (*Looking contemptuously at the* Queen, *who turns haughtily away.*)
But wherefore Alwy
Didst thou not boldly come to me at first
And tell thy fault? Might not thy former services
Out-balance well a greater crime than this?
Alwy. I so, indeed, had done, but a shrewd Thane,
Of mind revengeful, and most penetrating,

Teaches us caution in whate'er regards
His dealings with the state. I fear the man.
Ethw. And wherefore dost thou fear him?
Alwy. (*mysteriously.*) He has a cloudy brow,
a stubborn gait;
His dark soul is shut up from mortal man,
And deeply broods upon its own conceits
Of right and wrong.
Hex. He has a soul black with foul atheism
And heresies abominable. Nay,
He has a tongue of such persuasive art,
That all men listen to him.
Qu. (*eagerly.*) More than men:
Dark spirits meet him at the midnight hour,
And horrid converse hold.
Ethw. No more, I pray you! Ethelbert I know.
Qu. Indeed, indeed, my Lord, you know him
not!
Ethw. Be silent, wife. (*Turning to* Hex. *and* Al.)
My tried and faithful Alwy,
And pious Hexulf, in my private closet
We further will discourse on things of moment,
At more convenient time.
The leagued Thanes advance. Retire, Elburga:
Thou hast my leave. I gave thee no command
To join thy presence to this stern solemnity.
Soft female grace adorns the festive hall,
And sheds a brighter lustre on high days
Of pageant state; but in an hour like this,
Destin'd for gravest audience, 'tis unmeet.
Qu. What, is the queen an empty bauble, then,
To gild thy state withal?

Ethw. The queens of Mercia, first of Mercian dames,
Still fair example give of meek obedience
To their good Lords. This is their privilege.
(*Seeing that she delays to go.*)
It is my will. A good day to your highness.
Qu. (*aside as she goes off.*) Be silent, wife!
This Mollo's son doth say
Unto the royal offspring of a king. [EXIT Queen, *frowning angrily, and followed by* Dwina *and* Attendants.
(*The* Thanes, *who entered with* Ethwald, *and during his conversation with* Alwy, &c. *had retired to the bottom of the stage, now come forward.*)
Ethw. Now wait we for those grave and sluggish chiefs,
Who would this kingdom, fam'd for warlike Thanes,
Change into mere provision-land to feed
A dull unwarlike race.
Alwy. Ay, and our castles,
Whose lofty walls are darken'd with the spoils
Of glorious war, to barns and pinning folds,
Where our brave hands, instead of sword and spear,
The pruning knife and shepherd's staff must grasp.
Hex. True; sinking you, in such base toils unskill'd,
Beneath the wiser carl. This is their wish,

But heaven and our good saint will bring to nought
Their wicked machinations.

Enter an Officer *of the Castle.*

Offi. Th' assembled Thanes, my Lord, attend without.

Ethw. Well, let them enter. [EXIT Offi.
Our stool beneath us will not shake, I trust,
Being so fenced round. (*Taking his seat, and bowing courteously with a smiling countenance to the* Chiefs, *&c. who range themselves near him.*)

Enter several Thanes, *with* HEREULF *at their head, and presently after followed by* ETHELBERT.

Her. (*stretching out his hand with respectful dignity.*) Our king and sire, in true and humble duty
We come before you, earnestly intreating
Your royal ear to our united voice

Ethw. Mine ear is ever open to the voice
Of faithful duty.

Her. We are all men who, in th' embattled field,
Have by your side the front of danger braved,
With greater lack of prudence than of daring;
And have opposed our rough and scarred breasts
To the fell push of war, with liberality
Not yielding to the bravest of your Thanes,
The sons of warlike sires. But we are men
Who, in our cheerful halls, have also been
Lords of the daily feast; where, round our boards,
The hoary headed warrior, from the toil
Of arms releas'd, with the cheer'd stranger smiled:

Who in the humble dwellings of our hinds,
Have seen a numerous and hardy race,
Eating the bread of labour cheerfully,
Dealt to them with no hard nor churlish hand.
We, therefore, stand with graceful boldness forth,
The advocates of those who wish for peace.
Worn with our rude and long continued wars,
Our native land wears now the altered face
Of an uncultur'd wild. To her fair fields,
With weeds and thriftless docks now shagged o'er,
The aged grandsire, bent and past his toil,
Who in the sunny nook had plac'd his seat
And thought to toil no more, leads joyless forth
His widow'd daughters and their orphan train,
The master of a silent, cheerless band.
The half-grown stripling, urged before his time
To manhood's labour, steps, with feeble limbs
And sallow cheek, around his unroof'd cot.
The mother on her last remaining son
With fearful bodings looks. The cheerful sound
Of whistling ploughmen, and the reaper's song,
And the flail's lusty stroke is heard no more.
The youth and manhood of our land are laid
In the cold earth, and shall we think of war?
O valiant Ethwald! listen to the calls
Of gentle pity, in the brave most graceful,
Nor, for the lust of more extended sway,
Shed the last blood of Mercia. War is honourable
In those who do their native rights maintain;
In those whose swords an iron barrier are
Between the lawless spoiler and the weak:

But is in those who draw th' offensive blade
For added power or gain, sordid and despicable
As meanest office of the worldly churl.
Ethw. Chiefs and assembled Thanes, I much commend
The love you bear unto your native land.
Shame to the son nurs'd on her gen'rous breast
Who loves her not! and be assured that I,
Her reared child, her soldier, and her king,
In true and warm affection yield to none
Of all who have upon her turfy lap
Thus infant gambol held. To you her weal
Is gain and pleasure; glory 'tis to me.
To you her misery is loss and sorrow;
To me disgrace and shame. Of this be satisfied;
I feel her sacred claims, which these high ensigns
Have fastened on me, and I will fulfil them:
But for the course and manner of performance,
Be that unto the royal wisdom left,
Strengthen'd by those appointed by the state
To aid and counsel it. Ye have our leave,
With all respect and favour to retire.
Her. We will retire, king Ethwald, as becomes
Free, independent Thanes, who do of right
Approach or quit at will the royal presence,
And lacking no permission.
Alwy. What, all so valiant in this princely hall,
Ye who would shrink from the fair field of war,
Where soldiers should be bold?

Her. (*laying his hand on his sword.*)
Thou ly'st, mean boastful hireling of thy Lord,
And shalt be punish'd for it.
First Th. (*of* Ethwald's *side.*)
And dar'st thou threaten, mouth of bold sedition?
We will maintain his words. (*Draws his sword, and all the* Thanes *on the* King's *side do the same.* Hereulf *and the* Thanes *of his side also draw their swords.*)
First Th. (*of* Hereulf's *side.*)
Come on, base trockers of your country's blood.
First Th. (*of* Ethwald's *side.*)
Have at ye, rebel cowards!
Ethw. (*rising from his seat, and standing between the two parties in a commanding posture.*)
I do command you: peace and silence, chiefs!
He who with word or threat'ning gesture dares
The presence of his king again outrage,
I put without the covert of the law,
And on the instant punish. (*They all put up their swords, and* Ethwald, *after looking round him for some moments with commanding sternness, walks off majestically, followed by his* Thanes.)
Ethelbert. (*casting up his eyes to heaven as he turns to follow* Hereulf *and his party.*)
Ah, Mercia, Mercia! on red fields of carnage
Bleed thy remaining sons, and carrion birds
Tear the cold limbs that should have turn'd thy soil. [EXEUNT *the two different parties by opposite sides.*

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

ACT II.

SCENE I. *A small cavern, in which is discovered a* Wizard, *sitting by a fire of embers, baking his scanty meal of parched corn, and counting out some money from a bag; a book and other things belonging to his art are strewed near him on the ground.*

Wiz. (*alone.*) Thanks to the restless soul of Mollo's son!
Well thrives my trade. Here, the last hoarded coin
Of the spare widow, trembling for the fate
Of her remaining son, and the gay jewel
Of fearful maid, who steals by fall of eve,
With muffled face, to learn her warrior's doom,
Lie in strange fellowship; so doth misfortune
Make strange acquaintance meet.

Enter a Scout.

Brother, thou com'st in haste; what news, I pray?
Scout. Put up thy book, and bag, and wizard's wand,
This is no time for witchery and wiles,
Thy cave, I trow, will soon be fill'd with those,
Who are by present ills too roughly shent
To look thro' vision'd spells on those to come.

Wiz. What thou would'st tell me, tell in plainer words.

Scout. Well, plainly then, Ethwald, who thought full surely
The British, in their weak-divided state,
To the first onset of his arms would yield
Their ill-defended towers, has found them strengthen'd
With aid from Wessex, and unwillingly
Led back with cautious skill the Mercian troops;
Meaning to tempt the foe, as it is thought,
To follow him into our open plains,
Where they must needs with least advantage fight.

Wiz. Who told thee this?

Scout. Mine eyes have seen them. Scarcely three miles off,
The armies, at this moment, are engaged
In bloody battle. On my way I met
A crowd of helpless women, from their homes
Who fly with terror, each upon her back
Bearing some helpless babe or valued piece
Of household goods snatch'd up in haste. I hear
Their crowding steps e'en now within your cave:
They follow close behind.

Enter a crowd of Women, *young and old, some leading children and carrying infants on their backs or in their arms, others carrying bundles and pieces of household stuff.*

Wiz. Who are ye, wretched women,
Who, all so pale and haggard, bear along

Those hapless infants, and those seeming wrecks,
From desolation saved? What do you want?
First Wom. Nought but the friendly shelter of your cave,
For now or house, or home, or blazing hearth,
Good Wizard, we have none.
Wiz. And are the armies then so near your dwellings?
First Wom. Ay, round them, in them the loud battle clangs.
Within our very walls fierce spearmen push,
And weapon'd warriours cross their clashing blades:
Sec. Wom. Ah, woe is me! our warm and cheerful hearths,
And rushed floors, whereon our children play'd,
Are now the bloody lair of dying men.
Old. Wom. Ah, woe is me! those yellow thatched roofs,
Which I have seen these sixty years and ten,
Smoking so sweetly 'midst our tufted thorns,
And the turf'd graves wherein our fathers sleep!
Young Wom. Ah, woe is me! my little helpless babes!
Now must some mossy rock or shading tree
Be your cold home, and the wild haws your food.
No cheerful blazing fire and seething pot
Shall now, returning from his daily toil,
Your father cheer! if that, if that indeed
Ye have a father still. (*Bursting into tears.*)
Third Wom. Alack, alack! of all my goodly stuff
I've saved but only this! my winter's webs,

And all the stores that I so dearly saved!
I thought to have them to my dying day!

Enter a Young Man *leading in an* Ideot.

Young Wom. (*running up to him.*)
Ah, my dear Swithick! art thou safe indeed?
Why didst thou leave me?

Young Man. To save our ideot brother, see'st thou here?
I could not leave him in that pityless broil.

Young Wom. Well hast thou done! poor helpless Balderkin!
We've fed thee long, unweeting of our care,
And in our little dwelling still thou'st held
The warmest nook; and wheresoe'er we be,
So shalt thou still, albeit thou know'st it not.

Enter Man *carrying an* Old Man *on his back.*

Young Man. And see here, too, our neighbour Edwin comes,
Bearing his bed-rid father on his back.
Come in, good man. How dost thou, aged neighbour?
Cheer up again! thou shalt be shelter'd still;
The Wizard has receiv'd us.

Wiz. True, good folks;
I wish my means were better for your sakes.
But we are crowded here; that winding passage
Leads us into an inner cave full wide,
Where we may take our room and freely breathe;
Come, let us enter there.

[EXEUNT, *all following the* Wizard *into the inner cave.*

SCENE II.

A field of battle strewed with slain, and some people seen upon the back ground searching amongst the dead bodies. Enter HEREULF *and* ETHELBERT.

Her. (*stopping short, and holding up his hands.*)
Good mercy! see at what a bloody price
Ethwald this doubtful victory has purchased,
That in the lofty height to which he climbs
A little step will be of small advantage.
Eth. (*not attending to him, and after gazing for some time on the field.*)
So thus ye lie, who, with the morning sun,
Rose cheerily, and girt your armour on
With all the vigour, and capacity,
And comeliness of strong and youthful men.
Ye also, taken in your manhood's wane,
With grizzled pates, from mates, whose wither'd hands
For some good thirty years had smooth'd your couch:
Alas! and ye whose fair and early growth
Did give you the similitude of men
Ere your fond mothers ceas'd to tend you still,
As nurselings of their care, ye lie together!
Alas! alas! and many now there be,
Smiling and crowing on their mother's breast,
Twining, with all their little infant ways,

Around her hopeful heart, who shall, like these,
Be laid i' the dust.

Her. Ay, so it needs must be, since Mollo's son
Thinks Mercia all too strait for his proud sway.
But here comes those who search amongst the dead
For their lost friends; retire, and let us mark them. (*They withdraw to one side.*)

Enter Two Cairls, *meeting a* Third, *who enters by the opposite side.*

First Cairl. (*to* Third.) Thou hast been o'er the field?

Third Cairl. I have, good friend.

Sec. Cairl. Thou hast seen a rueful sight.

Third Cairl. Yes, I have seen that which no other sight
Can from my fancy wear. Oh! there be some
Whose writhed features, fix'd in all the strength
Of grappling agony, do stare upon you,
With their dead eyes half open'd. ——
And there be some, struck thro' with bristling darts,
Whose clenched hands have torn the pebbles up;
Whose gnashing teeth have ground the very sand.
Nay; some I've seen among those bloody heaps,
Defaced and 'reft e'en of the form of men,
Who in convulsive motion yet retain
Some shreds of life more horrible than death:
I've heard their groans, oh, oh!
(*A voice from the ground.*) Baldwick!

Third Cairl. What voice is that? it comes from some one near.

First Cairl. See, yon stretch'd body moves its bloody hand:

It must be him.

(*Voice again.*) Baldwick!

Third Cairl. (*going up to the body from whence the voice came.*)

Who art thou, wretched man? I know thee not.

Voice. Ah, but thou dost! I have sat by thy fire,

And heard thy merry tales, and shar'd thy meal.

Third Cairl. Good holy saints! and art thou Athelbald?

Woe! woe is me to see thee in such case!

What shall I do for thee?

Voice. If thou hast any love or mercy in thee,

Turn me on my face that I may die;

For lying thus, see'st thou this flooded gash?

The glutting blood so bolsters up my life

I cannot die.

Third Cairl. I will, good Athelbald. Alack the day!

That I should do for thee so sad a service!

(*Turns the soldier on his face.*)

Voice. I thank thee, friend, farewell! (*dies.*)

Third Cairl. Farewell! farewell! a merry soul thou wert,

And sweet thy ploughman's whistle in our fields.

Sec. Cairl. (*starting with horror.*) Good heaven forefend! it moves!

First Cairl. What dost thou see?

Sec. Cairl. Look on that bloody corse, so smear'd and mangled,
That it has lost all form of what it was;
It moves! it moves! there is life in it still.

First Cairl. Methought it spoke, but faint and low the sound.

Third Cairl. Ha! didst thou hear a voice? we'll go to it.
Who art thou? Oh! who art thou? (*To a fallen warriour, who makes signs to him to pull something from his breast.*)
Yes, from thy breast; I understand the sign.
(*Pulling out a band or 'kerchief from his breast.*)
It is some maiden's pledge.

Fallen Warriour. (*making signs.*) Upon mine arm,
I pray thee, on mine arm.

Third Cairl. I'll do it, but thy wounds are past all binding.

Warriour. She who will search for me doth know this sign.

Third Cairl. Alack, alack: he thinks of some sad maid!
A rueful sight she'll see! He moves again:
Heaven grant him peace! I'd give a goodly sum
To see thee dead, poor wretch!

Enter a Woman, *wailing and wringing her hands.*

Sec. Cairl. Ha! who comes wailing here?

Third Cairl. Some wretched mother who has lost her son:
I met her searching 'midst the farther dead,
And heard her piteous moan.

Mother. I rear'd him like a little playful kid,
And ever by my side, where'er I went,
He blithely trotted. And full soon, I ween,
His little arms did strain their growing strength
To bear my burden. Ay, and long before
He had unto a stripling's height attain'd,
He ever would my widow's cause maintain
With all the steady boldness of a man.
I was no widow then.

Sec. Cairl. Be comforted, good mother.

Mother. What says't thou to me? Know'st thou where he lies?
If thou hast kindness in thee, tell me truly;
For dead or living still he is mine all,
And let me have him.

Third Cairl. (*aside to* Second.) Lead her away, good friend; I know her now.
Her boy is lying with the farther dead,
Like a fell'd sapling; lead her from the field.

[EXEUNT Mother *and* Sec. Cairl.

First Cairl. But who comes now, with such distracted gait,
Tossing her snowy arms unto the wind,
And gazing wildly o'er each mangled corse?

Enter a Young Woman, *searching distractedly amongst the dead.*

Young Wom. No, no! thou art not here! thou art not here!
Yet, if thou be like these, I shall not know thee.
Oh! if they have so gash'd thee o'er with wounds,
And marr'd thy comely form! I'll not believe it.

Until these very eyes have seen thee dead,
These very hands have press'd on thy cold heart,
I'll not believe it.

Third Cairl. Ah, gentle maiden! many a maiden's love,
And many a goodly man lies on this field.

Young Wom. I know, too true it is, but none like him.
Liest thou, indeed, amongst those grisly heaps?
O thou! who ever wert of all most fair!
If heaven hath suffer'd this, amen, amen!
Whilst I have strength to crawl upon the earth,
I'll search thee out, and be, where'er thou art,
Thy mated love, e'en with the grisly dead.

(*Searching again amongst the dead, she perceives the band round the arm of the fallen* Warriour, *and uttering a loud shriek, falls senseless upon the ground. The* Cairls *run to her assistance, with* Ethelbert *and* Hereulf, *who come forward from the place they had withdrawn to;* Hereulf *clenching his hand, and muttering curses upon* Mollo's *son, as he crosses the stage. The scene closes.*)

SCENE III.

A Castle not far from the field of battle. Enter Ethwald *and* Alwy, *talking as they enter.*

Ethw. (*calling angrily to some one off the stage.*)
And see they do not linger on the road,
With laggard steps; I will brook no delay.
(*To* Alwy.) Why, even my very messengers, of late

Slothful and sleepy-footed have become :
They too must cross my will. (*Throws himself upon a seat, and sits for some time silent and gloomy.*)

Alwy. Your highness seems disturb'd.
What tho' your arms, amidst those British hills,
Have not, as they were wont, victorious prov'd,
And home retreating, even on your own soil,
You've fought a doubtful battle: luckless turns
Will often cross the lot of greatest kings;
Let it not so o'ercome your noble spirit.

Ethw. Thinkest thou it o'ercomes me?
(*Rising up proudly.*)
Thou judgest poorly. I am form'd to yield
To no opposed pressure, nor my purpose
With crossing chance or circumstance to change.
I, in my march, to this attained height
Have moved still with an advancing step,
Direct and onward;
But now the mountain's side more rugged grows,
And he who would the cloudy summit gain,
Must oft into its cragged rents descend
The higher but to mount.

Alwy. Or rather say, my Lord, that having gain'd
Its cloudy summit, there you must contend
With the rude tempests that do beat upon it.

Ethw. (*smiling contemptuously.*)
Is this thy fancy? Are thy thoughts of Ethwald
So poorly limited, that thou dost think
He has already gain'd his grandeur's height?
Know that the lofty point which oft appears,
To him who stands beneath, the mountain's top,

Is to the daring climber who hath reach'd it,
Only a breathing place, from whence he sees
Its real summit, bright and heaven illum'd,
Towering majestic, grand, above him far
As is the lofty spot on which he stands
To the dull plain below.
The British once subdued, Northumberland,
Thou seest well, could not withstand our arms.
It too must fall; and with such added strength,
What might not be achiev'd? Ay, by this arm!
All that the mind suggests, even England's crown,
United and entire. Thou gazest on me.
I know full well the state is much exhausted
Of men and means; and those curs'd Mercian women
To cross my purposes, with hag-like spite,
Do nought but females bear. But I will onward.
Still conscious of its lofty destination,
My spirit swells, and will not be subdued.

Alwy. I, chidden, bow, and yield with admiration
Unto the noble grandeur of your thoughts.
But lowering clouds arise; events are adverse;
Subdue your secret enemies at home,
And reign securely o'er the ample realm
You have so bravely won.

Ethw. What! have I thro' the iron fields of war
Proudly before th' admiring gaze of men,
Unto this point with giant steps held on,
Now to become a dwarf? Have I this crown
In bloody battles won, mocking at death,

To wear it now as those to whom it comes
By dull and leaden-paced inheritance?
As the dead shepherd's scrip and knotted crook
Go to his milk-fed son? Like those dull images,
On whose calm, tamed brows the faint impression
Of far preceding heroes faintly rests,
As the weak colours of a fading rainbow
On a spent cloud?
I'd rather in the centre of the earth
Inclosed be, to dig my upward way
To the far distant light, than stay me thus,
And, looking round upon my bounded state,
Say, this is all. No; lower it as it may,
I'll to the bold aspirings of my mind
Still steady prove, whilst that around my standard
Harness doth clatter, or a falchion gleam.

Alwy. What boot the bold aspirings of the great,
When secret foes beneath his footsteps work
Their treach'rous mine?

Ethw. Ay, thou before hast hinted of such foes.

Alwy. Fear for your safety, king, may make me err:
But these combined chiefs, it is full plain,
Under the mask of zeal for public good,
Do court with many wiles your people's hearts;
Breathing into their ears the praise of peace,
Yea, and of peaceful kings. The thralled Edward,
Whose prison-tower stands distant from this castle
But scarce a league——

Ethw. (*starting.*) Is it so near us?

Alwy. It is, my Lord.
Nor is he so forgotten in the land,
But that he still serves their dark purpose well.
An easy gentle prince—so brave, yet peaceful—
With such impressions clogg'd, your soldiers fight,
And therefore 'tis that with a feeble foe
Ethwald fights doubtful battles.

Ethw. Thou art convinced of this?

Alwy. Most perfectly.

Ethw. I too have had such thoughts, and have repress'd them.

Alwy. Did not those base petitioners for peace
Withhold their gather'd forces, till beset
On ev'ry side they saw your little army,
Already much diminish'd? then came they,
Like heaven-commission'd saviours, to your aid,
And drew unto themselves the praise of all.
This plainly speaks, your glory with disgrace
They fain would dash, to set their idol up;
For well they think, beneath the gentle Edward
To lord it proudly, and his gen'rous nature
Has won their love and pity. Ethelbert,
Now that such fair occasion offers to them,
The prisoner's escape may well effect:
He lacks not means.

Ethw. (*after a thoughtful pause.*)
Didst thou not say, that castle's foggy air,
And walls with dampness coated, to young blood
Are hostile and creative of disease?
In close confinement he has been full long;
Is there no change upon him?

Alwy. Some hardy natures will resist all change.

(*A long pause, in which* Ethwald *seems thoughtful and disturbed.*)

Ethw. (*abruptly.*)

Once in the roving fantasies of night,
Methought I slew him.

Alwy. Dreams, as some think, oft shew us things to come.

(*Another long pause, in which* Ethwald *seems greatly disturbed, and stands fixed to one spot, till catching* Alwy's *eye fastened stedfastly upon his, he turns from him abruptly, and walks to the bottom of the stage with hasty strides. Going afterwards to the door, he turns suddenly round to* Alwy *just as he is about to go out.*)

Ethw. What Thane was he, who, in a cavern'd vault,
His next of kin so long imprison'd kept,
Whilst on his lands he lived?

Alwy. Yes, Ruthal's Thane he was; but dearly he
The dark contrivance rued; fortune at last
The weary thrall reliev'd, and ruin'd him.

Ethw. (*agitated.*) Go where thy duty calls thee: I will in:
My head feels strangely; I have need of rest.

[EXIT.

Alwy. (*looking after him with a malicious satisfaction.*)

Ay, dark perturbed thoughts will be thy rest.
I see the busy workings of thy mind.

The gentle Edward has not long to mourn
His earthly thraldom. I have done my task,
And soon shall be secure; for whilst he lives,
And Ethelbert, who hates my artful rise,
I live in jeopardy. [EXIT.

SCENE IV.

A small dark passage; enter ETHWALD *with a lamp in his hand; enter at the same time, by the opposite side, a domestic* Officer; *they both start back on seeing one another.*

Ethw. Who art thou?

Offi. Baldwin, my Lord. But mercy on my sight,
Your face is strangely alter'd. At this hour
Awake, and wand'ring thus.—Have you seen aught?

Ethw. No, nothing. Know'st thou which is Alwy's chamber?
I would not wake my grooms.

Offi. It is that farther door; I'll lead you to it.
(*Pointing off the stage.*)

Ethw. No, friend, I'll go myself. Good rest to thee. [EXEUNT.

SCENE V.

A small dark chamber, with a low couch near the front of the stage, on which ALWY *is discovered asleep. Enter* ETHWALD *with a haggard countenance, bearing a lamp.*

Ethw. He sleeps—I hear him breathe—he soundly sleeps.

Seems not this circumstance to check my purpose,
And bid me still to pause? (*Setting down the lamp.*)
But wherefore pause ?
This deed must be, or, like a scared thief
Who starts and trembles o'er his grasped store
At ev'ry breezy whisper of the night,
I now must wear this crown, which I have bought
With brave men's blood, in fields of battle shed.
Ah ! would that all it cost had there been shed!
This deed must be ; for, like a haggard ghost
His image haunts me wheresoe'er I move,
And will not let me rest.
His love hath been to me my bosom's sting ;
His gen'rous trust hath gnaw'd me like a worm.
Oh ! would a swelt'ring snake had wreath'd my neck
When first his arms embraced me !
He is by fortune made my bane, my curse,
And, were he gentle as the breast of love,
I needs must crush him.
Prison'd or free, where'er he breathes, lives one
Whom Ethwald fears. Alas ! this thing must be,
From th' imaged form of which I still have shrunk,
And started back as from my fancy's fiend.
The dark and silent cope of night is o'er us,
When vision'd horrours, thro' perturbed sleep,
Harden to deeds of blood the dreamer's breast ;
When from the nether world fell demons rise
To guide with lurid flames the murd'rer's way :
I'll wake him now ; should morning dawn upon me,

My soul again might from its purpose swerve.
(*In a loud energetic voice.*)
Alwy, awake! Sleepest thou? sleepest thou, Alwy?
(Alwy *wakes.*) Nay, rouse thyself, and be thou fully waking.
What I would say must have thy mind's full bent;
Must not be spoken to a drousy ear.
Alwy. (*rising quickly.*) I fully am awake; I hear, I see,
As in the noon of day.
Ethw. Nay, but thou dost not.
Thy garish eye looks wildly on the light,
Like a strange visitor.
Alwy. So do the eyes of one pent in the dark,
When sudden light breaks on them, tho' he slept not.
But why, my Lord, at this untimely hour,
Are you awake, and come to seek me here?
Ethw. Alwy, I cannot sleep: my mind is toss'd
With many warring thoughts. I am push'd on
To do the very act from which my soul
Has still held back: fate doth compel me to it.
Alwy. Being your fate, who may its power resist?
Ethw. E'en call it so, for it, in truth, must be.
Know'st thou one who would do a ruthless deed,
And do it pitifully?
Alwy. He who will do it surest does it best!
And he who surely strikes, strikes quickly too,
And therefore pitifully strikes. I know
A brawny ruffian, whose firm clenched gripe

No struggles can unlock; whose lifted dagger,
True to its aim, gives not a second stroke!

Ethw. (*covering his face hastily.*) Oh! must it needs be so?

(*Catching* Alwy *eagerly by the arm.*) But hark thee well!
I will have no foul butchery done upon him.

Alwy. It shall be done, e'en to the smallest tittle,
As you yourself shall order.

Ethw. Nay, nay! do thou contrive the fashion of it,
I've done enough.

Alwy. But, good my Lord! cast it not from you thus:
There must be warrant and authority
For such a deed, and strong protection too.

Ethw. Well, well, thou hast it all: thou hast my word.

Alwy. Ay, but the murder'd corse must be inspected,
That no deceit be fear'd, nor after doubts;
Nor bold impostors rising in the North,
Protected by your treach'rous Thanes, and plum'd,
To scare you afterwards with Edward's name.

Ethw. Have not thine eyes on bloody death oft look'd;
Do it thyself.

Alwy. If you, my Lord, will put this trust in me,
Swear that when after-rumours shall arise,
As like there may, your faith will be unshaken.

Ethw. Yes; I will truly trust thee — (*vehemently, after a short pause.*)
No, I will not!
I'll trust to no man's vision but mine own.
Is the moon dark to-night?

Alwy. It is, an please you.

Ethw. And will be so to-morrow?

Alwy. Yes, my Lord.

Ethw. When all is still in sleep —— I hear a noise.

Alwy. Regard it not, it is the whisp'ring winds
Along those pillar'd walls.

Ethw. It is a strange sound, tho'. Come to my chamber,
I will not here remain: Come to my chamber,
And do not leave me till the morning break.
I am a wretched man!

[EXEUNT.

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

ACT III.

SCENE I. *A gloomy vaulted apartment in an old castle, with no windows to it, and a feeble light burning in one corner. Enter* EDWARD *from a dark recess near the bottom of the stage, with slow pensive steps, frequently stopping as he advances, and remaining for some time in a thoughtful posture.*

Ed. Doth the bright sun from the high arch
of heaven
In all his beauteous robes of flecker'd clouds,
And ruddy vapours, and deep glowing flames,
And softly varied shades, look gloriously?
Do the green woods dance to the wind? the lakes
Cast up their sparkling waters to the light?
Do the sweet hamlets in their bushy dells
Send winding up to heaven their curling smoke
On the soft morning air?
Do the flocks bleat, and the wild creatures bound
In antic happiness? and mazy birds
Wing the mid air in lightly skimming bands?
Ay, all this is; all this men do behold;
The poorest man. Even in this lonely vault,
My dark and narrow world, oft do I hear
The crowing of the cock so near my walls,
And sadly think how small a space divides me
From all this fair creation.

From the wide spreading bounds of beauteous nature,
I am alone shut out; I am forgotten.
Peace, peace! he who regards the poorest worm
Still cares for me, albeit he shends me sorely.
This hath its end. Perhaps, small as these walls,
A bound unseen divides my dreary state
From a more beauteous world; that world of souls,
Fear'd and desired by all: a veil unseen
Which soon shall be withdrawn. (*Casts up his eyes to heaven, and turning, walks silently to the bottom of the stage, then advancing again to the front.*)
The air feels chill; methinks it should be night.
I'll lay me down: perchance kind sleep will come,
And open to my view an inward world
Of gairish fantasies, from which nor walls,
Nor bars, nor tyrant's power, can shut me out.
(*He wraps himself in a cloak and lies down. Enter a* Ruffian, *stealing up softly to him as supposing him asleep.* Edward, *hearing him, uncovers his face, and then starts up immediately.*)
Ed. What art thou?
Or man or sprite? Thou lookest wond'rous stern,
What dost thou want? Com'st thou to murder me?
Ruff. Yes, I am come to do mine office on thee;
Thy life is wretched, and my stroke is sure.
Ed. Thou sayest true; yet, wretched as it is,
It is my life, and I will grapple for it.

Ruff. Full vainly wilt thou strive, for thinkest thou
We enter walls like these with changeling hearts,
To leave our work undone.
Ed. We, sayest thou?
There are more of you then?
Ruff. Ay, ay, there are enow to make it sure;
But, if thou wilt be quiet, I'll do't myself.
Mine arm is strong; I'll give no second stroke;
And all escape is hopeless.
Ed. What, thinkest thou I'll calmly stretch my neck
Until thou butch'rest me?
No, by good heaven! I'll grapple with thee still?
And die with my blood hot! (*putting himself in a posture of defence.*)
Ruff. Well, since thou'lt have it so, thou soon shalt see
If that my mates be lovelier than myself. [EXIT.
Ed. O that I still in some dark cell could rest,
And wait the death of nature! (*looking wildly round upon the roof and walls of the vault.*)
Nor stone, nor club, nor beam to serve my need!
Out from the walls, ye flints, and fill my grasp!
Nought! nought! Is there not yet within this nook
Some bar or harden'd brand that I may clutch?
(EXIT *hastily into the dark recess, and is followed immediately by two* Ruffians, *who enter by the opposite side, and cross the stage after him.*)

SCENE II.

An Apartment adjoining to the former, with a door leading to it at the bottom of the stage. Enter ALWY *with a stern anxious face, and listens at the door; then enter, by the opposite side,* ETHWALD *with a very haggard countenance.*

Ethw. Dost thou hear aught?
Alwy. No, nothing.
Ethw. But thou dost:
Is it not done?
Alwy. I hope it is, my Lord.
Ethw. Thou doubtest, then. — It is long past the hour
That should have lapp'd it. Hark! I hear a noise.
(*A noise heard within of people struggling.*)
Alwy. They're dealing with him now. They struggle hard.
Ethw. (*turning away with horror, and putting his hands upon his ears.*)
Ha! are we then so near it? This is horrid!
(*After a pause.*)
Is it not done yet? Dost thou hear them still?
Alwy. I hear them still: they struggle harder now.
(*The noise within heard more distinctly.*)
Ethw. By hell's dark host, thy fiends are weak of arm,
And cannot do their task! He will break forth,
With all the bloody work half done upon him!
(*Running furiously to the door, and then shuddering, and turning away from it.*)

No, no, I cannot go! do thou go in,
And give thy strength. Let him be still'd i' the instant. (*A noise heard within of one falling.*)

Alwy. There's no need now: did you not hear him fall? (*A groan heard within.*)
And that groan, too? List, list! The deed is done.

(*They both retire from the door, and* Ethw. *leaning his back against the wall, looks stedfastly towards it, in silent expectation, whilst it is seen to open slowly a little way, then shut, then open again, without any one appearing.*)

Ethw. What may this mean? This pause is horrible!
Will they or enter quickly, or forbear.

Enter First Ruffian, *with his hands and clothes bloody, and all his hair and dress in disorder, like one who has been struggling hard. Enter soon after him* Sec. Ruffian *in a similar plight.*

Alwy. (*eagerly.*) Ye've done it: is he dead?

First Ruf. He is still'd now; but with such horrid strength
He grappled with us! we have had fell work.

Alwy. Then let us see the body.

First Ruf. Yes, enter if it please ye.

Alwy. Be pleas'd, my Lord. (*To* Ethw.)

Ethw. Pray thee be satisfied: I cannot go.

Alwy. (*to the* Ruffians.) Bring ye the body hither. [EXEUNT Ruffians.

(*A silent pause.*—*Re-enter* Ruffians, *bearing the body, and laying it down before* Ethw.)

Look here, my Lord, and be well satisfied:
It is his very face, tho' somewhat changed
With long confinement in these sickly damps,
And the convulsive throes of violent death.

Ethw. (*first shrinking from it with horror, then commanding himself, and looking upon it for some time stedfastly*)

Yes, changed indeed! and yet I know it well.
Ah! changed indeed! Much he must needs have suffer'd
In his lone prison-house. Thou bruised flower!
And hast thou struggled all so bravely too
For thy most wretched life? Base, bloody work!
Remove it from my sight.

(*Turning hastily from it.*)

Alwy. What farther orders would you give these men?

Ethw. Away! speak to me not! thou'st made me curs'd!
Would all the realm of Mercia I had lost,
Ere it had come to this!
Once in the battle's heat I saved his life,
And he did bless me for it.

(*Beating his forehead distractedly.*)

Alwy. Nay, good my Lord, be not so keenly moved.
Where shall we lay the body?

Ethw. Thou and those fiends do with it as ye will:
It is a damned work! [Exit *hastily.*

Alwy. (*to* First Ruf.) Come thou with me.—
(*to* Sec. Ruf.)
We will return anon;
Meanwhile remain thou here and watch the corpse. [EXEUNT Alwy *and* First Ruf.

Sec. Ruf. (*alone.*) Watch it! I would not watch it here alone
For all my ruffian's hire. (*Throws a coarse cloth over the body, and exit hastily.*)

SCENE III.

A Saxon Hall in the former Castle. Enter ELB. *and* DWINA, *talking earnestly as they enter.*

Elb. But didst thou truly question ev'ry groom,
And the stern keeper of that postern gate?

Dwi. I have, but no one knew that he is absent.
'Twas dark night when the king went forth, and Alwy
Alone was with him. This is all I know.

Elb. Thus secretly, at night! Sexford's castle
Is not far distant. — That distracted maid —
If this be so, by the true royal blood
That fills my veins, I'll be reveng'd! What mean'st thou?
(*seeing* Dwina *shake her head piteously.*)

Dwi. Alas! you need not fear: far distant stand
The towers of Ethelbert; and that poor maid
With the quiet dead has found at last her rest.

Elb. And is't not well? Why dost thou shake thy head,
As tho' thou told'st sad news?—Yet what avails it?
I ne'ertheless must be a humble mate,

With scarcely e'en the semblance of a queen,
And bow my head whilst Mollo's son doth say,
" Be silent, wife." — Shall I endure all this?
O Edward! gentle Ethling! thou who once
Did'st bear the title of my future lord,
Would'st thou have us'd me thus? I'll not endure it.

Dwi. Yet be more patient.

Elb. Be patient, say'st thou? Go to, for I hate thee
When thou so calmly talk'st. Tho' seemingly,
I oft before his keen commanding eye
Submissive am, think'st thou I am subdu'd?
No, by my royal race! I'll not endure it:
I will unto the Bishop with my wrongs;
Rever'd and holy men shall do me right:
And here he comes unsent for; this my hope
Calls a good omen.

Enter HEXULF.

Good and holy father,
I crave your blessing.

Hex. Thou hast it, royal daughter. Art thou well?
Thou seem'st disorder'd.

Elb. Yes, rev'rend father, I am sorely gall'd
Beneath a heavy and ignoble yoke;
My crowned head is in subjection bow'd,
Like meanest household dame; and thinkest thou
That it becomes the daughter of a king,
The chief descendant of your royal race,
To bear all this, and say that she is well?

Hex. My daughter, your great Lord indeed
is form'd
Of soul more stern than was the gentle Edward,
On whom your maiden fancy first was taught
To dwell with sanguine hope. —

Elb. O holy Hexulf! thou hast nam'd a name
Which to my conscience gives such secret
pangs:
Oh! I have done such wrong to that sweet
youth,
My heart bleeds at the cruel thought. I would—
Yea, there is nothing that I would not do
In reparation of the wrong I've done him.
Speak, my good father, if thou aught canst say:
Edward, 'tis said, has many powerful friends
In secret still devoted to his cause,
And not far distant stands his dreary tower.
O speak to me!—Thou turn'st away thy head
Disturb'd and frowningly: hast thou no counsel
For a soul-smitten and distracted woman?

(*Laying her clasped hands earnestly on his shoulder, as he turns from her much displeased.*)

Hex. Daughter, forbear! you are indeed distracted.
Ethwald, by right of holy bands your lord,
Is in his seat too firmly fix'd; and Edward
Is only by some restless Thanes desired,
Under the influence of that dark wizard,
That heretic, who still ensnares the young.
Be wise then, I beseech you, and in peace
Live in the meek subjection of a wife.

Elb. (*stepping back from him with haughty contempt.*)
And so, meek, holy man, this is your counsel,
Breath'd from the gentle spirit of your state.
I've seen the chafings of your saintly ire
Restrain'd with less concern for sober duty,
When aught pertaining to your priestly rights
Was therein touch'd.

Dwi. Hush! Ethelbert approaches with his friends:
They come, methinks, at an unwonted hour.

Hex. That artful heretic regards not times;
His spells still shew to him the hour best suits
His wicked purposes.

Dwi. Heaven save us all! methinks at his approach
The air grows chill around us, and a hue
Of strange unnat'ral paleness spreads o'er all.

Elb. (*to* Dwi.) Peace, fool! thy fancy still o'ertops thy wit.

Enter SELRED, ETHELBERT, *and* HEREULF.

Eth. In your high presence, gracious dame, we are
Thus early visitors, upon our way
To crave admittance to the royal chamber.
Is the king stirring yet? Forgive my boldness.

Elb. Good Ethelbert, thou dost me no offence;
And you, Lord Selred, and brave Hereulf too,
I bid good morrow to you all. The king
Is not within his chamber: unattended
Of all but Alwy, at the close of night
He did go forth, and is not yet return'd.

Sel. This much amazes me: the moon was dark,
And cold and rudely blew the northern blast.
Dwi. (*listening.*) Hark! footsteps sound along
the secret passage:
Look to yon door, for something moves the bolt.
The king alone that sacred entry treads.

Enter ETHWALD *from a small secret door, followed by* ALWY, *and starts back upon seeing* Ethelbert, *&c.*

Ethw. (*recovering from his confusion.*)
A good and early morrow to you all:
I little thought — you are astir by times.
Eth. The same to you, my Lord, with loving
duty.
Sel. And you too, royal brother, you are moving
At an unwonted hour. But you are pale;
A ghastly hollow look is in your eyes!
What sudden stratagem of nightly war
Has call'd you forth at such untimely season?
The night was dark and cold, the north wind blew,
And if that I can read that alter'd brow,
You come not back unscath'd.
Ethw. (*confused.*) No, I am well.—The blast
has beat against me,
And tossing boughs my tangled pathway cross'd:
In sooth I've held contention with the night.
Sel. Yea, in good sooth, thou lookest too like
one
Who has contention held with damned sprites.
Hast thou not cross'd that glen where, as 'tis said,
The restless ghost of a dead murd'rer stalks?

Thou shudd'rest and art pale! O thou hast seen it:
Thou hast indeed the haggard face of one
Who has seen fearful things,
Ethw. Thou'rt wild and fanciful: I have seen nothing:
I am forespent and faint; rest will restore me.
Much good be to you all! (*going.*)
Eth. (*preventing him.*) Nay, on your royal patience, gracious king,
We must a moment's trespass make, to plead
For one, upon whose brave but gentle soul
The night of thraldom hangs. —
Ethw. (*shrinking back.*)
I know — I know thy meaning — speak it not.
It cannot be — there was a time — 'tis past.
Sel. O say not so; the time for blessed mercy
Is ever present. For the gentle Edward,
We'll pledge our lives, and give such hostages
As shall secure your peace.
Eth. Turn not away;
We plead for one whose meek and gen'rous soul
Most unaspiring is, and full of truth;
For one who lov'd you, Ethwald; one by nature
Form'd for the placid love of all his kind;
One who did ever in your growing fame
Take most unenvious joy. Such is our thrall:
Yea, and the boon that we do crave for him
Is but the free use of his cramped limbs,
And leave to breathe, beneath the cope of heaven,

The wholesome air; to see the cheering sun;
To be again reckon'd with living men.
(*Kneeling and clasping his knees.*)

Ethw. Let go, dark Thane; thou rack'st me with thy words;
They are vain sounds: — the wind has wail'd as thou dost,
And pled as sadly too. But that must be
What needs must be. Reckon'd with living men!
Would that indeed — O would that this could be!
The term of all is fix'd. — Good night to you —
I — I should say good morning, but this light
Glares strangely on mine eyes.
(*Breaking from* Eth.)

Sel. (*following him.*) My dearest brother, by a brother's love!

Ethw. (*putting him away with great agitation.*)
My heart no kindred holds with human thing.
[EXIT *quickly, in great perturbation, followed by* Alwy.

Sel. and *Hereulf* (*looking expressively at each other, and then at* Ethelbert.)
Good Ethelbert, what ails thee?

Her. Thy fix'd look has a dreadful meaning in it.

Eth. Let us begone.

Sel. No, do not yield it so. I still will plead
The gentle Edward's cause: his frowns I fear not.

Eth. Come, come; there is no cause;
Edward is free.

Sel. How so? thou speak'st it with a woeful voice.

Eth. Is not the disembodied spirit free?

Sel. Ha! think'st thou that? — No, no; it cannot be.

Her. (*stamping on the ground, and grasping his sword.*)

I'll glut my sword with the foul murd'rer's blood,
If such foul deed hath been.

Eth. Hush, hush, intemp'rate boy! Let us begone. [EXEUNT Eth. Sel. *and* Her.

El. (*to* Dwi.) Heard'st thou how they conceive it?

Dwi. Ay, mercy! and it is a fearful thought!
It glanc'd e'en o'er my mind before they spoke.

El. Thou'rt silent, rev'rend father; are thy thoughts
Of such dark hue? (*with solemn earnestness to* Hex.)

Hex. Heaven's will be done in all things! erring man
Bows silently. Good health attend your greatness.

El. Nay, go not yet, good Hexulf: in my closet
I much desire some converse with thee. Thou,
Belike, hast misconceiv'd what I have utter'd
In unadvised passion, thinking surely
It bore some meaning 'gainst my lord the king.

Hex. No, gracious daughter, I indeed receiv'd it
As words of passion. You are mov'd, I see:
But let not this dismay you: if the king
Has done the deed suspicion fastens on him,

We o'er his mind shall hold the surer sway.
A restless penitent will docile prove
To priestly counsel: this will be our gain.
But in your closet we'll discourse of this.
Heaven's will be done in all things! [EXEUNT.

SCENE IV.

The King's Chamber. Enter ETHWALD *with a thoughtful miserable look, and stands silently muttering to himself, when* ALWY *enters in hast, followed by an* Officer.

Alwy. Pardon, my Lord; we bring you pressing tidings.

Ethw. (*angrily.*) Shall I ne'er rest in peace in mine own chamber?
Ha! would that peace were there! — You bring me tidings;
And from what quarter come they?

Alwy. From Utherbald, who holds your western fortress.

Ethw. He doth not yield, I hope, unto the foe?
It is my strongest hold, and may defy
The strength of Wessex and of Britain join'd.

Of. True, king, but famine all things will subdue.

Ethw. He has surrender'd, then: by heaven and hell
I'll have his head for this!

Alwy. No, royal Ethwald,
It is not yet so bad; but this brave man,
Commission'd by himself, will tell you all.

Ethw. Speak, warriour: then he holds the fortress still?

Of. He does, my Lord, but much he lives in fear
He shall not hold it long, unless your highness
Will give your warrant to release the prisoners;
Those ill designing Mercians whom your wisdom
Under his guard has placed.
He bade me say the step is dangerous;
But, if it is not done, those idle mouths
Consuming much, will starve him and his men
Into compliance with the foe's demand.
What is your sov'reign will? for on the instant
I must return.

Ethw. Tell him this is no time for foolish hazard.
Let them be put to death.

Of. (*shrinking back.*) Must I return with this? all put to death?

Ethw. Yes, I have said: did'st thou not hear my words?

Of. I heard, in truth, but mine ears strangely rung.
Good saints there are, my Lord, within our walls,
Close pris'ners kept, of war-bred men alone,
Of whom, I trow, there scarcely is a man
Who has not some fair stripling by his side
Sharing the father's bonds, threescore and ten;
And must they all ——

Ethw. I understand thee, fool.
Let them all die! have I not said it? Go;
Linger not here, but bear thy message quickly.

[EXIT Officer *sorrowfully.*

(*Angrily to* Alwy.) What! thou look'st on me too, as if, forsooth,
Thou wert amaz'd at this. Perceiv'st thou not
How hardly I'm beset to keep the power
I have so dearly bought? Shall this impede me?
Let infants shrink! I have seen blood enough;
And what have I to do with mercy now?
(*Stalking gloomily away, then returning.*)
Selred and Ethelbert, and fiery Hereulf,
Are to their castles sullenly retired,
With many other warlike Thanes. The storm
Is gath'ring round me, but we'll brave it nobly.

Alwy. The discontented chiefs, as I'm inform'd
By faithful spies, are in the halls of Hereulf
Assembled, brooding o'er their secret treason.

Ethw. Are they? Then let us send a chosen band,
And seize them unprepared. A nightly march
Will bring them near his castle. Let us then
Immediate orders give; the time is precious.

[EXEUNT.

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

ACT IV.

An Apartment in the royal castle or chief residence of ETHWALD. DWINA *and several of the* Ladies *serving the* Queen *are discovered at work; some spinning, some winding coloured yarns for the loom, and some embroidering after a rude fashion.*

Dwi. (*looking over the* First Lady's *work.*)
How speeds thy work? The queen is now impatient;
Thou must be diligent.
First Lad. Nine weary months have I, thou knowest well,
O'er this spread garment bent, and yet thou see'st,
The half is scarcely done. I lack assistance.
Dwi. And so thou dost, but yet in the wide realm
None can be found but such as lack the skill
For such assistance. All those mingled colours,
And mazy circles, and strange carved spots,
Look, in good sooth, as tho' the stuff were strew'd
With rich and curious things: tho' much I fear
To tell you what no easy task would prove.
Sec. Lad. There lives a dame in Kent, I have been told,
Come from some foreign land, if that indeed

She be no cunning fiend in woman's garb,
Who, with her needle, can most cunningly
The true and perfect semblance of real flowers,
With stalk and leaves, as fairly fashion out
As if upon a summer bank they grew.

First Lad. Ay, ay! no doubt! thou hear'st strange tales, I ween.
Did'st thou not tell us how, in foreign lands
Full far from this, the nice and lazy dames
Do set foul worms to spin their silken yarn?
Ha, ha! (*They all laugh.*)

Sec. Lad. (*angrily.*) I did not say so.

First Lad. Nay, nay, but thou did'st! (*laughing.*)

Sec. Lad. Thou did'st mistake me wilfully, in spite,
Malicious as thou art!

Dwi. I pray you wrangle not! when ladies work,
They should tell pleasant tales or sweetly sing,
Not quarrel rudely, thus, like villains' wives.
Sing me, I pray you now, the song I love.
You know it well: let all your voices join.

Omnes. We will, good Dwina.

SONG.

Wake a while and pleasant be,
Gentle voice of melody.

Say, sweet carol, who are they
Who cheerly greet the rising day?

Little birds in leafy bower;
Swallows twitt'ring on the tower;
Larks upon the light air borne;
Hunters rous'd with shrilly horn;
The woodman whistling on his way;
The new-wak'd child at early play,
Who barefoot prints the dewy green,
Winking to the sunny sheen;
And the meek maid who binds her yellow hair,
And blythly doth her daily task prepare.

Say, sweet carol, who are they
Who welcome in the evening grey?
The housewife trim and merry lout,
Who sit the blazing fire about;
The sage a conning o'er his book;
The tired wight, in rushy nook,
Who half asleep, but faintly hears
The gossip's tale hum in his ears;
The loosen'd steed in grassy stall;
The Thanies feasting in the hall;
But most of all the maid of cheerful soul,
Who fills her peaceful warrior's flowing bowl.

Well hast thou said! and thanks to thee,
Voice of gentle melody!

Dwi. (*to* Third Lady, *who sits sad and pensive.*)
What is the matter, Ella? Thy sweet voice
Was wont to join the song.

Ella. Ah, woe is me! within these castle walls;
Under this very tower in which we are,
There be those, Dwina, who no sounds do hear
But the chill winds that o'er their dungeons howl;
Or the still tinkling of the water-drops
Falling from their dank roofs, in dull succession,
Like the death watch at sick men's beds. Alas!
Whilst you sing cheerly thus, I think of them.

Dwi. Ay, many a diff'rent lot of joy and grief
Within a little compass may be found.
Under one roof the woeful and the gay
Do oft abide; on the same pillow rest.
And yet, if I may rightly judge, the king
Has but small joy above his wretched thralls.
Last night I listened to his restless steps,
As oft he paced his chamber to and fro,
Right o'er my head! and I did hear him utter
Such heavy groans!

First Lady. (*with all the others gathering about* Dwina *curiously.*)
Didst thou? And utter'd he no other sound?
I've heard it whisper'd, at the dead of night
He sees strange things.

All. (*speaking together.*) O tell us, Dwina! tell us!

Dwi. Out on you all! you hear such foolish tales!
He is himself the ghost that walks the night,
And cannot rest.

Ella. Belike he is devising in his mind
How he shall punish those poor prisoners,
Who were in Hereulf's towered halls so lately
Surpriz'd, and in these hollow vaults confined.
First Lady. No marvel that it should disturb him much,
When his own brother is amongst the guilty.
There will be bloody doings soon, I trow!
Dwi. Into the hands of good and pious Hexulf
The rebels will be put, so to be punish'd
As he in holy zeal shall see it meet.
Ella. Then they will dearly suffer!
Dwi. That holy man no tortures will devise.
Ella. Yes, so perchance, no tortures of the flesh;
But there be those that do upon the soul
The rack and pincer's work.
Is he not grandson to that vengeful chief,
Who, with the death-axe lifted o'er his head,
Kept his imprison'd foe a live-long night,
Nor, till the second cock had crow'd the morn,
Dealt him the clemency of death? Full well
He is his child I know!
Dwi. What aileth thee? art thou bewitched also?
Lamentest thou that cursed heretics
Are put in good men's power? The sharpest punishment
O'er-reaches not their crime.
Ella. O Dwina, Dwina! thou hast watch'd by me

When on a sick-bed laid, and held my head,
And kindly wept to see my wasted cheek,
And lov'st thou cruelty? It cannot be!

Dwi. No, foolish maiden! mercy to such fiends
Were cruelty.

Ella. Such fiends! Alas! do not they look like men?
Do they not to their needful brethren do
The kindly deeds of men? Yea, Ethelbert
Within his halls a houseless Thane maintain'd,
Whose substance had been spent in base attempts
To work his ruin.

Dwi. The blackest fiends of all most saintly forms
Oft wear. Go, go! thou strangely art deluded.
I tremble for thee! get thee hence and pray,
If that the wicked pity of thy heart
May be forgiven thee.

Enter a Lady *eagerly.*

Come, damsels, come! along the gallery,
In slow procession holy Hexulf walks,
With saintly Woggarwolfe, a fierce chief once,
But now a cowled priest of marv'llous grace.
They bear some holy relics to the queen,
Which, near the royal couch with blessings laid,
Will to the king his wonted rest restore.
Come, meet them on their way and get a blessing.

Dwi. We will all gladly go. [EXEUNT.

SCENE II.

A royal Apartment, lighted only by the Moon thro' the high arched Windows. Enter ETHWALD, *as if just risen from Bed, loose and disordered, but bearing a drawn Sword in his Hand.*

Ethw. Still must this heavy closeness thus oppress me?
Will no fresh stream of air breathe on my brow,
And ruffle for a while this stilly gloom?
O night, when good men rest, and infants sleep!
Thou art to me no season of repose,
But a fear'd time of waking more intense,
Of life more keen, of misery more palpable.
My rest must be when the broad sun doth glare;
When armour rings and men walk to and fro;
Like a tir'd hound stretch'd in the busy hall,
I needs must lie; night will not cradle me.
(*looking up anxiously to the windows.*)
What, looks the moon still thro' that lofty arch?
Will't ne'er be morn?
If that again in strength
I led mine army on the bold career
So surely shapen in my fancy's eye,
I might again have joy; but in these towers,
Around, beneath me, hateful dungeons yawn,
In every one of which some being lives
To curse me. Ethelbert, and Selred too,
My father's son and my youth's oracle,
Ye too are found with those, who raise to heaven

The prisoner's prayer against my hated head.
I am a lofty tree of growth too great
For its thin soil, from whose wide rooted fangs
The very rocks and earth that foster'd it
Do rend and fall away. — I stand alone!
I stand alone! I thought, alas! to spread
My wide protecting boughs o'er my youth's friends;
But they, like pois'nous brushwood at my root,
Have chok'd my stately growth e'en more than all.
(*Musing for some time gloomily.*)
How marr'd and stinted hath my greatness been!
What am I now of that which long ere now
I hop'd to be? O! it doth make me mad
To think of this! By hell it shall not be!
I would cut off this arm and cast it from me
For vultures' meat, if it did let or hinder
Its nobler fellow.
Yes, they shall die! I to my fortune's height
Will rear my lofty head, and stand alone,
Fearless of storm or tempest.
(*Turns round his head upon hearing a noise, and seeing* Elburga *enter at the bottom of the stage, with a lamp in her hand, like one risen from bed, he starts back and gazes wildly upon her.*)
What form is that? What art thou? Speak! speak quickly!
If thou indeed art aught of living kind.
Elb. Why didst thou start? Dost thou not know me?

Ethw. No;
Thy shadow seem'd to me a crested youth.
Elb. And with that trusty weapon in thy grasp,
Which thou, of late, e'en on thy nightly couch
Hast sheathless kept, fearest thou living man?
Ethw. It was not living man I fear'd.
Elb. What then?
Last night when open burst your chamber door
With the rude blast, which it is wont to do,
You gaz'd upon it with such fearful looks
Of fix'd expectancy, as one, in truth,
Looks for the ent'ring of some dreadful thing.
Have you seen aught?
Ethw. Get to thy couch. Thinkst thou I will be question'd?
Elb. (*putting her hand upon his shoulder soothingly.*)
Nay, be not thus uncourtly! thou shalt tell me.
Ethw. (*shaking her off impatiently.*)
Be not a fool! get thee to sleep, I say!
What dost thou here?
Elb. That which, in truth, degrades my royal birth,
And therefore should be chid; servilely soothing
The fretful moods of one, who, new to greatness,
Feels its unwieldly robe sit on his shoulders
Constrain'd and gallingly.
Ethw. (*going up to her sternly and grasping her by the wrist.*)
Thou paltry trapping of my regal state,
Which with its other baubles I have snatch'd,

Dar'st thou to front me thus? Thy foolish pride,
Like the mock loftiness of mimick greatness,
Makes us contemned in the public eye,
And my tight rule more hateful. Get thee hence;
And be with hooded nuns a gorgeous saint,
For know, thou lackest meekness for a queen.

(Elb. *seems much alarmed, but at the same time walks from him with great assumed haughtiness, and exit.*)

Ethw. (*alone.*) This woman racks me to the very pitch!
Where I should look for gentle tenderness,
There find I heartless pride. Ah! there was one
Who would have sooth'd my troubles! there was one
Who would have cheer'd——But wherefore think I now? (*pausing thoughtfully.*)
Elburga has of late been to my will
More pliant, oft assuming gentle looks:
What may this mean? under this alter'd guise
What treach'ry lurks? (*pausing again for some time.*)
And yet it should not be:
Her greatness must upon my fortune hang,
And this she knows full well. I've chid her roughly.
Some have, from habit and united interest,
Amidst the wreck of other human ties,
The stedfast duty of a wife retain'd,
E'en where no early love or soft endearments

The bands have knit. Yes; I have been too rough.
(*Calling to her off the stage.*)
Elburga! dost thou hear me, gentle wife?
And thou com'st at my bidding: this is kindly.

Enter ELBURGA, *humbled.*

Elb. You have been stern, my Lord, You think belike,
That I have urged you in my zeal too far
To give those rebel chieftains up to Hexulf,
As best agreeing with the former ties
That bound you to those base ungrateful men,
And with the nature of their chiefest crime,
Foul heresy; but, if in this I err,
Zeal for your safety urged me to offend.

Ethw. I've been too stern with thee, but heed it not.
And in that matter thou hast urged so strongly,
But that I much mistrust his cruelty,
I would resign those miserable men
To Hexulf's vengeful arm; for much he does
Public opinion guide, and e'en to us,
If now provok'd, might prove a dang'rous foe.

Elb. Mistrust him not; he will by oath engage
To use no torture.

Ethw. And yet methinks, Selred might still be saved.
A holy man might well devise the means
To save a brother.

Elb. He will think of it.
Much do the soldiers the bold courage prize,

And simple plainness of his honest mind;
To slay him might be dangerous.

Ethw. Ha! is it so? They've praised him much of late?

Elb. Yes, he has grown into their favour greatly.

Ethw. The changeful fools! I do remember well
They shouted loudly o'er his paltry gift,
Because so simply giv'n, when my rich spoils
Seem'd little priz'd. I like not this. 'Twere well
He were remov'd. We will consider this.

Elb. Come to your chamber then.

Ethw. No, no! into that dark oppressive den
Of horrid thoughts I'll not return.

Elb. Not so!
I've trimm'd the smold'ring fire, and by your couch
The holy things are laid: return and fear not.

Eth. I thank thy kindness; I, indeed, have need
Of holy things, if that a stained soul
May kindred hold with such. [EXEUNT.

SCENE III.

A vaulted Prison. HEREULF, SELRED, *and* Three Thanes *of their party, are discovered walking gloomily and silently up and down.*

First Thane. (*to the* Second, *who groans heavily.*)
Ah! wherefore, noble partner, art thou thus?
We all are brothers, equal in misfortune;
Let us endure it nobly!

Sec. Th. Ay, so I would, but it o'ercometh me.
E'en this same night, in my far distant home
Fires blaze upon my towers, to guide my steps
Thro' woody dells which I shall pass no more.
E'en on this night I promis'd to return.

First Th. Yet bear it up, and do not dash us thus;
We have all pleasant homes as well as thou,
To which I fear we shall no more return.

Sel. (*to* Third Thane, *who advances from the bottom of the stage.*)
What didst thou look at yonder? Where is Ethelbert?

Third Th. Within yon deep recess, upon his knees;
Just now I saw him, and I turn'd aside,
Knowing the modest nature of his worship.

Enter ETHELBERT *from the recess, slowly advancing from the bottom of the stage.*

But see, he comes, and on his noble front
A smiling calmness rests, like one whose mind
Hath high communion held with blessed souls.

Her. (*to* Eth.) Where hast thou been, brave Ethelbert? Ah! now
Full well I see! thy countenance declares.
Didst thou remember us? A good man's prayers
Will from the deepest dungeon climb heaven's height,
And bring a blessing down.

Eth. Ye all are men who with undaunted hearts

Most nobly have contended for the right:
Your recompence is sure; ye shall be bless'd.
Sec. Th. How bless'd? With what assurance of the mind
Hast thou pray'd for us? Tell us truly, Ethelbert;
As those about to die, or those who yet
Shall for a term this earthly state retain?
Such strong impress'd ideas oft foreshew
Th' event to follow.
Eth. Man, ever eager to foresee his doom
With such conceits his fancy fondly flatters,
And I too much have given my mind to this;
But let us now, like soldiers on the watch,
Put our soul's armour on, alike prepared
For all a soldier's warfare brings. In heav'n
He sits, who on the inward war of souls
Looks down, as one beholds a well-fought field,
And nobly will reward the brave man's struggle.
(*Raising his clasped hands fervently.*)
O let him now behold what his weak creatures,
With many cares and fears of nature weak,
Firmly relying on his righteous rule,
Will suffer cheerfully! Be ye prepared!
Her. We are prepared: what say ye, noble colleagues?
First Th. If that I here a bloody death must meet,
And in some nook unbless'd, far from the tombs
Of all mine honour'd race, these bones be laid,
I do submit me to the will of heaven.
Third Th. E'en so do I in deep submission bow.

Sec. Th. If that no more within my op'ning gates
My children and my wife shall e'er again
Greet my return, or this chill'd frame again
E'er feel the kindly warmth of home, so be it!
His blessed will be done who ruleth all!

Her. If these nerv'd arms, full in the strength of youth,
Must rot i' the earth, and all my glorious hopes
To free this land, with which high beat this heart,
Must be cut off i' th' midst, I bow my spirit
To its Almighty Lord; I murmur not.
Yet, O that it had been permitted me
To have contended in that noble cause!
Low must I sleep in an unnoted grave,
Whilst the oppressor of my native country
Riots in brave men's blood!

Eth. Peace, noble boy! he will not riot long.
They shall arise, who for that noble cause,
With better fortune, not with firmer hearts
Than we to th' work have yoked, will bravely strive.
To future heroes shall our names be known;
And in our graves of turf we shall be bless'd.

Her. Well then, I'm satisfied: I'll smile in death;
Yea, proudly will I smile! it wounds me not.

Eth. How, Selred? thou alone art silent here:
To heaven's high will what off'ring makest thou?

Sel. Nothing, good Ethelbert. What can a man
Little enriched with the mind's rare treasure,
And of th' unrighteous turmoil of this world

Right weary grown, to his great Maker offer?
Yet I can die as meekly as ye will,
Albeit of his regard it is unworthy.

Eth. Give me thy hand, brave man! Well hast thou said!

In truth thy off'ring far outprizes all;
Rich in humility. Come, valiant friends;
It makes my breast beat high to see you thus
For fortune's worst prepar'd with quiet minds.
I'll sit me down awhile; come, gather round me,
And for a little space the time beguile
With the free use and interchange of thought:
Of that which no stern tyrant can controul.

(*They all sit down on the ground.*)

Her. (*to* Eth.) Nay, on my folded mantle do thou sit.

Eth. I thank thee, but I feel no cold. My children!

We do but want, methinks, a blazing fire,
To make us thus a friendly chosen circle
For converse met. Then we belike would talk
Of sprites, and magic power, and marv'llous things,
That shorten weary hours; now let us talk
Of things that do th' inquiring mind of man
With nobler wonder fill; that state unseen,
With all its varied mansions of delight,
To which the virtuous go, when like a dream
Smote by the beams of op'ning day, this life
With all its shadowy forms, fades into nothing.

First Th. Ay, Ethelbert, thou'rt full of sacred lore;

Talk thou of this, and we will gladly hear thee.
How think'st thou we shall feel, when, like a nestling
Burst from its shell, we wake to this new day?
Eth. Why e'en, methinks, like to the very thing
To which, good Thane, thou hast compared us:
For here we are but nestlings, and I trow,
Pent up i' the dark we are. When that shall open
Which human eye hath ne'er beheld, nor mind
To human body link'd, hath e'er conceiv'd,
Grand, awful, lovely: —O! what form of words
Will body out my thoughts! — I'll hold my peace.
(*Covers his head with his hand, and is silent for a moment.*)
Then like a guised band, that for a while
Has mimick'd forth a sad and gloomy tale,
We shall these worthless weeds of flesh cast off,
And be the children of our father's house.
Her. (*eagerly.*) But what say'st thou of those who doff these weeds
To clothe themselves in flames and endless woe?
Eth. Peace to thee! what have we to do with this?
Let it be veil'd in night!
Her. Nay, nay, good Ethelbert!
I fain would know what foul oppression earns;
And please my fancy with the after-doom
Of tyrants, such as him beneath whose fangs
Our wretched country bleeds. They shall be cursed:
O say how deeply!

Eth. Hereulf, the spirit of him thou call'st thy master,
Who died for guilty men, breathes not in thee.
Dost thou rejoice that aught of human kind
Shall be accursed?

Her. (*Starting up.*) If not within the fiery gulph of woe
His doom be cast, there is no power above !

Eth. For shame, young man ! this ill beseems thy state :
Sit down and I will tell thee of this Ethwald.

Sel. (*rising up greatly agitated.*)
O no! I pray thee do not talk of him !
The blood of Mollo has been Mercia's curse.

Eth. Sit down; I crave it of you both; sit down
And wear within your breasts a manlier spirit.
(*Pointing to* Her. *to sit close by him.*)
Nay here, my son, and let me take thy hand.
Thus by my side, in his fair op'ning youth,
Full oft has Ethwald sat and heard me talk,
With, as I well believe, a heart inclined,
Tho' somewhat dash'd with shades of darker hue,
To truth and kindly deeds.
But from this mixed seed of good and ill
One baleful plant in dark strength rais'd its head,
O'ertopping all the rest; which fav'ring circumstance
Did foster up to a growth so monstrous,
That underneath its wide and noxious shade
Died all the native plants of feebler stem.
O, I have wept for him, as I have lain

On my still midnight couch! I try'd to save him,
But ev'ry means against its end recoil'd.
Good Selred, thou rememb'rest well that night
When to the Female Druid's awful cave
I led thy brother.

Sel. I remember well.

(*All the* Thanes *speaking at once, eagerly.*)

Ay, what of that? We've heard strange tales of it?

Eth. At my request the Arch Sister there receiv'd him;
And tho' she promis'd me she would unfold
Such things as might a bold ambitious mind
Scare from its wishes, she, unweetingly,
Did but the more inflame them.

Her. Ha! what say'st thou?
Did she not shew the form of things to come
By fix'd decrees, unsubject to her will?

Eth. She shew'd him things, indeed, most wonderful;
Whether by human arts to us unknown,
Or magic, or the aid of powerful spirits
Call'd forth, I wot not. Hark! I hear a noise.

First Th. I hear without the tread of many feet.
They pull our dungeon's bars: ha, see who come!
Wear they not ruffians' brows?

Sec. Th. And follow'd still by more: a num'rous crew.
What is their business here?

(*Enter a band of armed men, accompanied by* Two Priests, *and carrying with them a block, an axe, and a large sheet or curtain, &c.*)

Eth. Do not the axe and block borne by those slaves
Tell thee their errand? But we'll face them bravely.
They do not come upon us unawares;
We are prepar'd.—Let us take hands, my friends!
Let us united stand, a worthy band
Of girded trav'llers, ready to depart
Unto a land unknown, but yet undreaded.
(*They all take hands, facing about, and waiting the approach of the men with a steady countenance.*)
First Pr. Why look you on us thus with lowering brows?
Can linked hands the keen-edg'd steel resist?
Her. No, Priest, but linked hearts can bid defiance
To the barb'd lightning, if so arm'd withal
Thou didst encounter us. Quick do thine office!
Here six brave heads abide thee, who ne'er yet
Have meanly bow'd themselves to living wight.
First Pr. You are too forward, youth: less will suffice:
One of those guilty heads beneath our axe
Must fall, the rest shall live. So wills our chief.
Lots shall decide our victim: in this urn
Inclosed are your fates. (*Setting down an urn in the middle of the stage upon a small tripod or stand, whilst the chiefs instantly let go hands, and stand gazing upon one another.*)
Ha! have I then so suddenly unlink'd you?
(*With a malicious smile.*)

Put forth your hands, brave chiefs; put forth
your hands;
And he who draws the sable lot of death,
Full speedy be his doom!
(*A long pause: the chiefs still look upon one another, none of them offering to step forward to the urn.*)
What pause ye thus, indeed? This hateful urn
Doth but one death contain, and many lives,
And shrink ye from it, brave and valiant Thanes?
Then lots shall first be cast, who shall the first
Thrust in his hand into this pot of terrors.
Eth. (*stepping forth.*) No, thou rude servant
of a gentle master,
Doing disgrace to thy much honour'd garb,
This shall not be: I am the eldest chief,
And I of right should stand the foremost here.
(*Putting his hand into the urn.*)
What heaven appoints me, welcome!
Sel. (*putting in his hand.*)
I am the next: heaven send me what it lists!
First Th. (*putting in his hand.*)
Here also let me take. If that the race
Of noble Cormac shall be sunk in night,
How small a thing determines!
Sec. Th. (*putting in his hand.*)
On which shall fix my grasp? (*hesitating*) or this?
or this?
No, cursed thing! whate'er thou art, I'll have
thee.

Third Th. (*putting out his hand with perturbation, misses the narrow mouth of the urn.*)
I wist not how it is: where is its mouth?
First Pr. Direct thy hand more steadily, good Thane,
And fear not thou wilt miss it. (*To* Hereulf.)
Now, youthful chief, one lot remains for thee.
(Hereulf *pauses for a moment, and his countenance betrays perturbation, when* Ethelbert *steps forth again.*)
Eth. No, this young chieftain's lot belongs to me;
He shall not draw. (*Putting in his hand quickly and taking out the last lot.*)
Now, Priest, the lots are finish'd.
First Pr. Well, open then your fates.
(*They each open their lots, whilst* Hereulf *stands looking eagerly in their faces as they open them.*)
Sec. Th. (*opening his, and then holding up his hands in extacy.*)
Wife, children, home! I am a living man!
First Th. (*having opened his.*)
I number still with those who breathe the air,
And look upon the light! blest heaven so wills it.
Third Th. (*looking at his joyfully.*)
Fate is with me! the race of Cormac lives!
Her. (*after looking anxiously first upon* Ethelbert *and then upon* Selred.)
Selred, what is thy lot? is't not dark?
Sel. No, Hereulf.

Her. Oh, Ethelbert! thou smilest on me! alas!
It is a dismal smile! thou art the victim!
Thou shalt not die: the lot of right is mine.
A shade of human weakness cross'd my soul,
Such as before, not in the horrid fields
Of crimson slaughter did I ever feel;
But it is past; now I can bravely die,
And I will have my right.

Eth. (*pushing him affectionately away.*)
Away, my son! It is as it should be.

Her. O if thou wilt entreat me as a man,
Nor slur me with contempt! I do beseech thee
Upon my bended knee! (*Kneeling.*) O if thou diest,
I of all living things most wretched am!

Eth. Be temperate, my son! thou art reserv'd
For what the fervid strength of active youth
Can best perform. O take him from me, friends!
(*The* Thanes *take* Hereulf *forcibly from clinging round* Ethelbert, *and he then assuming a softened solemnity.*)
Now, my brave friends, we have together fought
A noble warfare; I am call'd away!
Let me in kind and true affection leave you.

Thanes. (*speaking together.*) Alas, thou art our father and our friend!
Alas, that thou should'st meet this dismal end!

Eth. Ay, true, indeed, it is a dismal end!
To mortal feeling; yet within my breast
Blest hope and love, and heaven-ward confidence,
With human frailty so combined are,
That I do feel a wild and trembling pleasure.

Even on this awful verge, methinks I go,
Like a chid infant, from his passing term
Of short disgrace, back to his father's presence.
(*Holding up his hands with a dignified exultation.*)
I feel an awful joy! — Farewell, my friends!
Selred, we've fought in many a field together,
And still as brothers been; take thou, I pray,
This token of my love. And thou, good Wolfere,
I've ever priz'd thy worth, wear thou this ring.
(*To the two other chiefs, giving them also tokens.*)
And you, brave chiefs, I've ever lov'd you both.
And now, my noble Hereulf,
Of all the youth to whom my soul e'er knit,
As with a parent's love, in the good cause,
Thee have I found most fervent and most firm;
Be thine my sword, which in my native hall,
Hung o'er my noble father's arms, thou'lt find,
And be it in thy hands what well thou know'st
It would have been in mine. Farewell, my friends!
God bless you all!

(*They all crowd about him, some kissing his hands, some taking hold of his clothes, except* Hereulf, *who starting away from him, throws himself upon the ground in an agony of grief.* Ethelbert *lifts up his eyes and his hands as if he were muttering a silent blessing over them.*)

First Pr. This may not be! down with those impious hands!
Dar'st thou, foul heretic, before the face
Of hallow'd men, thus mutter prayers accurst?

Eth. Doth this offend you?—O it makes me feel
A spirit for this awful hour unmeet,
When I do think on you, ye hypocrites!

First Pr. Come, come! we waste our time, the heads-man waits.
(*To* Eth.) Prepare thee for the block.

Eth. And will you in the sight of these my friends
Your bloody task perform? Let them retire.

First Pr. Nay, nay, that may not be our pious Hexulf
Has given his orders.

Sec. Pr. O be not so cruel!
Tho' he has ordered so, yet, ne'ertheless,
We may suspend this veil, and from their eyes
The horrid sight conceal.

First Pr. Then be it so; I grant it.

(*A large cloth or curtain is suspended upon the points of two spears, held up by spearmen, concealing the block and executioner, &c. from the* Thanes.)

First Pr. (*to the men behind the curtain, after a pause,*) Are ye ready?

Voices behind. Yes, we are ready now. (*To* Eth.) And thou?

Eth. God be my strength! I'm ready also.

(*As the* Priest *is leading* Ethelbert *behind the curtain, he turns about to give a last look to his friends; and they, laying their hands devoutly upon their breasts, bow to him*

very low. They then go behind the curtain, leaving the Thanes *on the front of the stage, who stand fixed in silent and horrid expectation; except* Selred, *who sits down upon the ground with his face hid between his knees, and* Hereulf, *who rising suddenly from the ground, looks wildly round, and seeing* Ethelbert *gone, throws himself down again in all the distraction of grief and despair.*)

(*A voice behind, after some noise and bustle of preparation has been heard.*)

Now do'ff his garment, and undo his vest.

Fie on it, there! assist the prisoner.

Sec. Voice. Let some one hold his hands.

Third Voice. Do ye that office. (*A pause of some length.*)

Voice again. Heads-man, let fall thy blow, he gives the sign.

(*The axe is seen lifted up above the curtain, and the sound of the stroke is heard.*)

Thanes. (*shrinking involuntarily, and all speaking at once.*)

The stroke of death is given!

(*The Spearmen let fall the curtain, and the body of* Ethelbert *is discovered upon the ground, with a cloth over it; whilst his head is held up by the Executioner, but seen very indistinctly through the spears and pikes of the surrounding Soldiers. The* Thanes *start back and avert their faces.*

First. Pr. (*coming forward.*)
Rebellious Thanes, ye see a deed of justice.
Here rest ye, and another day of life
Enjoy together: at this hour to-morrow
We'll visit you, and then, by lot determin'd,
Another head must fall. So wills the king.
First Th. What words are these?
Second Th. Do thine ears catch their sense?
Third Th. I cannot tell thee; mine confus'dly sound.
First Pr. (*raising his voice louder.*)
To-morrow at this hour we'll visit you,
And here again, selected by the lot,
Another head must fall. Till then, farewell!
Another day of life enjoy securely:
Much happiness be with you.

(*An involuntary groan bursts from the* Thanes, *and* Hereulf, *starting furiously from the ground, clenching his hands in a menacing posture as the Priests and Spearmen, &c. retire. The scene closes.* *)

END OF THE FOURTH ACT.

* Should this play ever have the honour of being represented upon any stage, a scene of this kind, in which so many inferior actors would be put into situations requiring the expression of strong passion, might be a disadvantage to it; I should, therefore, recommend having the front of the stage on which the Thanes are, during the last part of the scene, thrown into deep shade, and the light only to come across the back-ground at the bottom of the stage: this would give to the whole a greater solemnity; and by this means no expression of countenance, but only that of gesture, would be required of them.

ACT V.

SCENE I. *An open space on the walls of the castle. Enter* ALWY *and* HEXULF, *talking as they enter with violent gesture.*

Hex. (*with angry vehemence.*)
Escap'd, say'st thou, with all the rebel chiefs?
Hereulf escap'd? th' arch fiend himself hath done it,
If what thou say'st be true. — It is impossible.
Say'st thou they are escap'd?
Alwy. In very truth they are.
Hex. Then damned treachery has aided them!
Alwy. Nay, rather say, thy artful cruelty
Arm'd them with that which to the weakly frame
Lends a nerv'd giant's strength; despair. From out
The thick and massy wall, now somewhat loose
And jagged grown with time, cemented heaps,
Which scarce two teams of oxen could have mov'd,
They've torn, and found a passage to the moat.
What did it signify in what dire form
Death frown'd upon them, so as they had died?
Hex. Who can foresee events? As well as thou

I would that one swift stroke had slain them all
Rather than this had been. But Ethelbert
And Selred are secur'd. Was it not Selred
Who on the second night our victim fell?
Alwy. It was, but better had it been for us
Had they been left alive: had they been still
In their own castles unmolested left.
For like a wounded serpent, who, aloft,
The surgy volumes of his mangled length
In agony the more terrific rears
Against his enemy, this maimed compact
Will from thy stroke but the more fiercely rise,
Now fiery Hereulf is their daring leader.
And what have we to look for?
Hex. Dire, bloody vengeance. — O some damned traitor
Hath done this work! it could not else have been!
Alwy. Well, do thou find him out then, if thou canst,
And let thy vengeance fall where lies the sin.
Hex. Doth the king know of this?
Alwy. He doth not yet.
Hex. Then must he be inform'd without delay.
Alwy. As quickly as you please, if that you please
To take that office on yourself, good father;
But as for me, I must right plainly say
I will not venture it: no faith! of late
The frame and temper of king Ethwald's mind
Is chang'd. He ever was in former times

Cheerful, collected, sanguine; for all turns
Of fate prepar'd, like a fair ample lake,
Whose breast receives the azure hue of heaven,
And sparkles gaily in the breezy noon:
But now, like a swoln flood, whose course has been
O'er rude opposing rocks and rugged shelves;
Whose turbid waters wear the sullen shade
Of dark o'erhanging banks, and all enchaf'd
Round ev'ry little pebble fiercely roars,
Boiling in foamy circles, his chaf'd spirit
Can bear th' encounter of no adverse thing
To his stern will oppos'd. I may not tell him.

Hex. Be not so fearful! art thou not a man
Us'd to the sudden turns of great men's humours?
Thou best can do it, Alwy. (*Soothingly.*)

Alwy. Nay, father, better will it suit your age
And rev'rend state. And he has need, I ween,
Of ghostly counsel too: night after night
He rises from his tossing sleepless couch,
Oft wildly staring round the vacant chamber,
As if his fancy peopled the dark void
With horrid shapes. The queen hath told me this.
Come, look to it, for something must be done.

Hex. I will accompany your homeward steps,
Whilst we consider of it. [EXEUNT.

SCENE II.

A royal apartment, and a Servant *discovered busily employed in lighting it up. Enter to him another* Servant.

Sec. Serv. Wilt thou ne'er finish lighting these grim walls?
Will not those lamps suffice?
First Serv. No, by my faith, we want as many more;
For still, thou see'st, that pillar'd corner's dark,
(*Pointing to a gloomy recess on the other side of the stage.*)
Wherein the eye of conscience-scared folks
Might fearful things espy. I am commanded
To lighten each apartment of this tower
To noon-day pitch.
Sec. Serv. Ay, Uthbert, these are fearful, bloody times!
Ethwald, God knows, has on his conscience laid
A weight of cruel deeds: the executioner
Works for him now in the grim holds of death,
Instead of armed warriours in the field;
And now men steal abroad in twilight's gloom,
To talk of fearful things, not by the blaze
Of cheerful fires, in peaceful cottage, heap'd
With sparkling faggots from the winter store.
First Serv. Ay, thou say'st well; it is a fearful time;
No marvel Ethwald should not love the dark
In which his fancy shapes all fearful things.

Sec. Serv. What, dost thou think it is his fancy's shapes
He looks upon? No, no: believe me, friend,
Night and the darkness are inhabited
By those who move near neighbours to the living;
Close by their very sides, yet unperceiv'd
By all, but those whose eyes unveiled are
By heavenly power, in mercy or in wrath.
Such proofs of this I've heard. — Last night thou know'st
The royal grooms who near their master sleep,
In the adjoining chamber much were scar'd
With fearful sounds.

First Serv. I know it not. — Who was it told it thee?
At midnight was it? (*Eagerly.*)

Sec. Serv. Yes, come with me to Baldwick, he will tell thee;
He heard it all: thou wilt return in time
To finish, here, thy task. We'll have a horn
Of foaming ale, and thou shalt hear it all.
Good foaming ale: ay, mercy on us all!
We live in fearful times! (*Listening.*)

First Serv. (*listening also.*) What shall I do?
I hear the king a speaking angrily,
And coming hitherward. What shall I do?
Shall I remain and face him? nay, good faith!
I'll shun the storm: he is engag'd, perchance,
Too much to notice my unfinish'd task.

[EXEUNT *hastily.*

Enter ETHWALD, *talking angrily to a noble* Thane.

Ethw. Nay, nay, these are excuses, noble Edmar,
Not reasons; all our northern troops ere now
Might well have been in readiness. 'Tis plain
Such backward sloth from disaffection springs.
Look to it well:—if with the waining moon,
He and his vassals have not join'd our standard,
I'll hold him as a traitor.

Thane. My royal Lord, be not so wroth with him,
Nor let your noble mind to dark suspicion
So quickly yield. This is the season still,
When unbraced warriours on the rushy floor
Stretch them in pleasing sloth; list'ning to tales
Of ancient crones, or merry harpers' lays,
And batt'ning on the housewife's gusty cheer:
Spring has not yet so temper'd the chill sky
That men will change their warm and shelt'ring roofs
For its cold canopy.

Ethw. O foul befall their gluttony and sloth!
Fie on't! there is no season to the brave
For war unfit. With this moon's waining light,
I will, with those who dare their king to follow,
My northern march begin.

Thane. Then, faith, my Lord,
I much suspect your army will be small:
And what advantage may you well expect
From all this haste? E'en three weeks later, still
You will surprise the foe, but ill prepar'd

To oppose invasion. Do then, gracious king,
Listen to friendly counsel, and the while,
Within these walls where ev'ry pleasure courts you,
Like a magnificent and royal king,
Your princely home enjoy.

Ethw. Out on it, man, thou know'st not what thou say'st!
Home hath he none who once becomes a king!
Behind the pillar'd masses of his halls
The dagger'd traitor lurks; his vaulted roofs
Do nightly echo to the whisper'd vows
Of those who curse him; at his costly board
With grinning smile the damned pois'ner sits;
Yea, e'en the void recesses of his chamber,
Void tho' they be unto all eyes but his,
Are peopled——— (*stopping short.*)

Thane. (*eagerly.*) Good my Lord! what do you mean?

Ethw. In the confusion of tumultuous war,
'Midst the terrific shouts of closing foes,
And trampling steeds, and din of bick'ring arms;
Where dying warriours groan unheard, and things
Horrid to nature are as tho' they were not,
Unwail'd, unheeded:
Where the rough chance of each contentious day
Blots out all irksome mem'ry of the past,
All fear of that to follow: where like herds
Of savage beasts, on the bleak mountain's side,
Drench'd with the rain, the weary warriours lie,
Whilst nightly tempests howling o'er their heads
Lull them to rest; there is my home, good Thane.

Thane. No marvel, then, my Lord, if to the field
You turn your eager thoughts! I only fear
Your royal arms will in Northumberland
Find no contention worthy of their force;
For rumour says, the northern prince is gone
With his best troops against the Scottish king.
Ethw. If this be true, it is unto my fortune
Most fair occasion; master of the north
I soon shall be, and on the west again
Pour like a torrent big with gather'd strength.
Who told thee this? it breaks upon me, friend,
Like bright'ning sunbeams thwart a low'ring sky.
Thane. A northern villain brought to me the tale,
And told with circumstances of good credit.
Ethw. Run thou and find him out; I'll wait thee here;
I must have more assurance of this matter.
Quickly, my worthy Edmar! [EXIT Thane.
(*Alone.*) If that this rumour bears a true report,
Th' opposing rocks on which my rising tide
So long has beat, before me now give way,
And thro' the breach my onward waves shall roll
To the wide limits of their destin'd reach.
Full day, altho' tempestuous it may prove,
Now breaks on me! now come the glorious height,
And the proud front, and the full grasp of power!
Fly, gloomy thoughts, and hideous fantasies,
Back to the sprites that sent you! England's king

Behind him casts the fears of Mercia's lord.
The north subdued, then stretching to the west
My growing strength——(*stretching out his arms in the vehemence of action, he turns himself round, directly facing the gloomy recess on the opposite side of the stage.*)
Ha! doth some gloomy void still yawn before me,
In fearful shade? (*Turning his eyes away hastily from it.*)
No; I saw nothing: shall I thus be moved
With ev'ry murky nook? I'll look again. (*Steals a fearful look to the recess, and then starting back, turns away from it with horrour.*)
O they're all there again! and ev'ry phantom
Mark'd with its grisly wounds, e'en as before.
Ho! who waits there? Hugon! I say, ho, Hugon!
Come to me! quickly come!

Enter a Groom *of his chamber.*

Groom. Save you, my royal Lord! What is your pleasure?
Are you in pain? Your voice did sound, methought,
With strange unnat'ral strength.
Ethw. Bring me lights here.
Groom. A hundred lamps would scarce suffice, I ween,
To light this spacious chamber.
Ethw. Then let a thousand do it; must I still
In ev'ry shady corner of my house
See hideous——quickly go, and do my bidding.
Why star'st thou round thee thus? dost thou see aught?

Groom. No, nothing. (*Looking round fearfully.*)
Ethw. Thou need'st not look; 'tis nothing; fancy oft
Deceives the eye with strange and flitting things.
Regard it not, but quickly bring more lamps.
Groom. Nay, good my Lord, shall I remain with you,
And call my fellow?
Ethw. (*angrily.*) Do as thou art commanded.
[EXIT Groom.
This man perceives the weakness of my mind.
Am I, indeed, the warlike king of Mercia?
(*Re-enter two* Grooms *with lamps, which they place in the recess.* Ethwald, *not venturing to look on it again till the lights are placed, now turns round to it, and seems relieved.*)
Ye have done well. (*After a pause, in which he walks several times across the stage, stopping short, and seeing the* Grooms *still there.*)
Why do ye linger here? I want ye not.
Begone. [EXEUNT Grooms.
But that I would not to those fools
Betray the shameful secret of my mind,
I fain would call them back.
What are these horrours?
A fearful visitation of a time
That will o'erpass? O might I so believe it!
Edmar, methinks, ere this might be return'd:
I'll wait for him no more: I'll go myself
And meet him. (*Going towards the large arched door by which he entered, he starts back from it with horrour.*)

Ha! they are there again!
E'en in the very door-way do they front me!
Still foremost Ethelbert and Selred tower
With their new-sever'd necks, and fix on me
Their death-strain'd eye-balls: and behind them frowns
The murder'd youth, and Oswal's scepter'd ghost:
Whilst seen, as if half-fading into air,
The pale distracted maid shews her faint form.
Thrice in this very form and order seen
They have before me stood. What may it mean?
I've heard that shapes like these will to the utterance
Of human voice give back articulate sound,
And, having so adjured been, depart.
(*Stretching out both his hands, and clenching them resolutely.*)
I'll do it, tho' behind them hell should yawn,
With all its unveil'd horrours. (*Turning again to the door-way with awful solemnity.*)
If ought ye be but flitting fantasies,
But empty semblance of the form ye wear;
If aught ye be that can to human voice
Real audience give, and a real sense receive
Of that on which your fix'd and hollow eyes
So stern and fix'dly glare; I do conjure you
Depart from me, and come again no more!
From me depart! Full well those ghastly wounds
Have been return'd into this tortur'd breast:
O drive me not unto the horrid brink

Of dire distraction!
Speak, Ethelbert! O speak, if voice thou hast!
Tell me what sacrifice can sooth your spirits;
Can still the unquiet sleepers of the grave:
For this most horrid visitation is
Beyond endurance of the boldest mind,
In flesh and blood enrob'd.—It takes no heed,
But fix'dly glares upon me as before.
I speak to empty air: it can be nothing.
Is it not some delusion of the eyes?
(*Rubbing his eyes very hard, and rousing himself.*)
Ah! still the hideous semblance is before me,
Plain as at first. I cannot suffer this!
(*Runs to the lamps, and taking one in each hand, rushes forward in despair to the doorway.*)
They are all gone! Before the searching light
Resolv'd to nothing!

Enter HEXULF *and* ALWY.

Ethw. (*turning hastily upon hearing them enter behind him.*)
Ha! is it you? Most happily you come!
Welcome you are, most welcome!
Alwy. Thanks to you, good my Lord! but on my life
This holy bishop and myself are come,
Unwillingly, with most untoward tidings.
Ethw. Well, use not many words: what now befalls?

Hex. The rebel Hereulf and his thralled mates
Have, with more strength than human hands may own,
For that the holy church ——
Ethw. Well, well, what meanest thou?
And what should follow this?
Alwy. They've broke their prison walls and are escap'd.
Ethw. I am glad on't! be it so! In faith I'm glad!
We have shed blood enough.
Alwy. Nay, but my Lord, unto their towers of strength
They will return; where bruiting abroad
Their piteous tale, as 'nighted travellers
To the false plainings of some water fiend,
All men will turn to them; nor can your troops
In safety now begin their northern march
With such fell foes behind them.
Ethw. (*roused.*) Ay, thou say'st true; it is a damned let!
Here falls another rock to bar my way.
But I will on! Come let us instantly
Set out, and foil them ere they gather strength.
Alwy. This would be well, but that within these walls
Some of their faithful friends are still confin'd,
Who in our absence might disturbance breed,
As but a feeble guard can now be spar'd
To hold the castle. How shall this be settled?
Shall we confine them in the stronger vaults?

Ethw. (*fiercely.*) No, no! I'll have no more imprisonments!
Let them be slain; yea all: even to a man!
This is no time for weak uncertain deeds.
Saw you not Edmar as you hither came?
Alwy. We saw him with a stranger much engaged,
By a faint lamp, near to the eastern tower.
Ethw. Then follow me, and let us find him out.
Hex. We follow you, my Lord.
Ethw. (*as he is about to go out, turning hastily round to* Alwy.)
Bear thou a light.
My house is like a faintly mooned cave,
And hateful shadows cross each murky aisle.
[EXEUNT, Alwy *bearing a light.*

SCENE III.

The evening: a wood with a view of ETHWALD'*s castle seen thro' the trees. Enter* HEREULF *disguised like a country hind: enter to him, by another path, a* Thane, *disguised also.*

Her. Welcome, my friend! art thou the first to join me?
This as I guess should be th' appointed time:
For o'er our heads have passed on homeward wing
Dark flights of rooks and daws and flocking birds,
Wheeling aloft with wild dissonant screams;
And from each hollow glen and river's bed

The white mist slowly steals in fleecy wreaths
Up the dark wooded banks. And yet, methinks,
The deeper shades of ev'ning come not after,
As they are wont, but day is lengthen'd out
Most strangely.

Thane. See'st thou those paly streams of shiv'-
ring light
So widely spread along the northern sky?
They to the twilight grey that brightness lend
At which thou wonderest. Look up, I pray thee!

Her. (*turning and looking up.*)
What may it mean? it is a beauteous light.

Thane. In truth I know not. Many a time
have I
On hill and heath beheld the changeful face
Of awful night; I've seen the moving stars
Shoot rapidly athwart the sombre sky.
Red fiery meteors in the welkin blaze,
And sheeted lightnings gleam, but ne'er before
Saw I a sight like this. It is, belike,
Some sign portentous of our coming fate:
Had we not better pause and con awhile
This daring scene, ere yet it be too late?

Her. No, by this brave man's sword! not for an
hour
Will I the glorious vengeful deed delay,
Tho' heaven's high dome were flaming o'er my
head
And earth beneath me shook. If it be aught
Portentous, it must come from higher powers:
For demons ride but on the lower clouds,

Or raise their whirlwinds in the nether air.
All blessed spirits still must favour those
Who war on virtue's side: therefore, I say,
Let us march boldly to the glorious work:
It is a sign foretelling Ethwald's fall.
Now for our valiant friends; they must be near.
Ho! holla, ho!

(*Enter, by different paths in the wood, the other* Chiefs, *disguised, and gather round* Hereulf, *he receiving them joyfully.*)

Welcome! all welcome! you good Thane, and you,
And ev'ry valiant soul, together leagued
In this bold enterprise. Well are we met.
So far we prosper; and my glowing heart
Tells me our daring shall be nobly crown'd.
Now move we cheerly on our way: behold
Those frowning towers, where, ere the morning watch,
That shall be done, for which, e'en in our graves,
Full many a gen'rous Mercian, yet unborn,
Shall bless our honour'd names.

Chiefs. (*speaking all together.*) We follow you, brave Hereulf.

First Chief. Ay, with true heart, or good or ill betide,
We'll follow you.

Her. Come on! ere this, with fifty chosen men,
Our trusty colleague, near the northern gate,
Attends our signal. Come, ye gen'rous few;
Ye who have groan'd in the foul dungeon's gloom,

Whose gen'rous bosoms have indignant heav'd
To see free men beneath th' oppressor's yoke
Like base-born villains press'd! Now comes the hour
Of virtuous vengeance: on our side in secret
Beats ev'ry Mercian heart: the tyrant now
Trusts not to men: nightly within his chamber
The watch-dog guards his couch, the only friend
He now dare trust, but shall not guard it long.
Follow my steps, and do the gen'rous deeds
Of valiant freemen: heaven is on our side.

[EXEUNT.

SCENE IV.

An open space within the walls of the castle, fronting one of the gates: the stage darkened, and the sky lighted up with the aurora borealis, very bright. Enter by opposite sides Two Officers *of the castle.*

First Off. Ha! is it thee, my friend?
Thou'st left thy post, I guess, as well as I,
To view this awful sky. Look over head,
Where like a mighty dome, from whose bright centre
Shoot forth those quiv'ring rays of vivid light,
Moving with rapid change on every side,
Swifter than flitting thought, the heavens appear!
Whilst o'er the west in paler brightness gleam
Full many a widely undulating tide
Of silver light; and the dark low'ring east,
Like to a bloody mantle stretched out,

Seems to conceal behind its awful shade
Some dread commotion of the heavenly powers,
Soon to break forth — some grand and unknown thing.

Second Off. It is an awful sight! what may it mean?

Doth it not woes and bloody strife foretell?
I've heard my father talk of things like this. —
When the king's passing sickness shall be gone,
Which has detain'd him from his purpos'd march
Against the rebel chiefs, doubt not, my friend,
We shall have bloody work.

First Off. Ay, but ere that, mayhap, the man of blood
May bleed; and Mercia from the tyrant's grasp —

Second Off. Hush, hush! thou art unwise: some list'ning ear ——

First Off. And if there should, what danger? all men now
Harbour such secret thoughts; and those who once
His youthful valour lov'd and warlike feats,
Now loath his cruelty. I'll tell thee something—
(*Drawing nearer him mysteriously.*)

Second Off. (*frightened.*) Hush, hush! I will not hear thee! hold thy tongue!
What will't avail, when on the bloody stake
Thy head is fix'd, that all men think as thou dost:
And he who fix'd thy cruel doom to-day
Shall die to-morrow?

First Off. I'm mute, my friend: and now I plainly see
How he may lord it o'er a prostrate land,
Who trembles in his iron tower the while,
With but a surly mastiff for his friend.

Second Off. Nay, do not speak so loud. What men are these
Who pass the gate just now? shall we not stop them?

(*Enter some of the leagued* Chiefs *in disguise through the gate.*)

First Off. No, do not trouble them. They are, I guess,
Some 'nighted rustics frighten'd with the sky,
Who seek the shelter of man's habitation.
In such an awful hour men crowd together,
As gath'ring sea-fowl flock before a storm.
With such a welkin blazing o'er our heads,
Shall men each other vex? e'en let them pass.

(*Enter a crowd of frightened* Women *and* Children.)

Second Off. See what a crowd of women this way come.
With crying children clinging to their knees,
And infants in their arms! How now, good matrons?
Where do you run?

First Wom. O do not stop us! to Saint Alban's shrine
We run: there will we kneel, and lift our hands,
For that his holy goodness may protect us
In this most awful hour.

Sec. Wom. On, sisters, on!
The fiery welkin rages o'er our heads,
And we are sinful souls: O quickly move!
[EXEUNT Women *and* Children.
Sec. Off. I also am, alack! a sinful soul:
I'll follow them and pray for mercy too.
First Off. I'll to the northern wall, from whence the heavens
In full expanse are seen. [EXEUNT *severally.*

SCENE V.

ETHWALD's *apartment: he is discovered sitting by his couch, with his elbows resting upon his knees, and supporting his head between both his hands; the* Queen *standing by him.*

Qu. Why sit you thus, my Lord? it is not well:
It wears your strength; I pray you go to rest.
(*A pause, and he makes no answer.*)
These nightly watchings much retard your cure:
Be then advis'd! (*A pause, and he still takes no notice.*)
Why are you thus unwilling?
The tower is barr'd, and all things are secure.
Ethw. How goes the hour? is it the second watch?
Qu. No: near the window now, I heard the guard
Exchange the word: the first is but half spent.
Ethw. And does the fearful night still lie before me
In all its hideous length? (*Rising up with emotion.*)

O ye successive terms of gloomy quiet!
Over my mind ye pass, like rolling waves
Of dense oppression; whilst deep underneath
Lie all his noble powers and faculties
O'erwhelmed. If such dark shades must henceforth cross
My checker'd life with still returning horrours,
O let me rest in the foul reptile's hole,
And take from me the being of a man!

Qu. Too much thou givest way to racking thought:
Take this: it is a draught by cunning skill
Compounded curiously, and strongly charm'd;
With secret virtue fill'd — it soothes the mind,
And gives the body rest. (*Offering him a cup.*)

Ethw. Say'st thou? then in good sooth I need it much.
I thank thee too; thou art a careful wife.
(*Takes the cup, and as he is about to put it to his lips, stops short and looks suspiciously at her.*)
It has, methinks, a strange unkindly smell.
Taste it thyself: dost thou not take my meaning:
Do thou first drink of it.

Qu. I am in health, my Lord, and need it not.

Ethw. By the dread powers of darkness thou shalt drink it!
Ay, to the very dregs!

Qu. What, would you cast on me such vile suspicions,
And treat a royal princess like your slave?

Ethw. And so thou art. Thou rear'st thy stately neck,
And whilst I list, thou flarest in men's eyes
A gorgeous queen; but unto me thou art ——
I do command thee, drink it to the dregs.
Qu. (*subdued, and lifting the cup to her lips.*)
Then be convinced how wrongful are thy thoughts.
Ethw. (*preventing her.*) Forbear, I am too slightly mov'd to anger.
I should have known the being of thy state
Is all too closely with my fortune link'd.
Give me the cup. Thou say'st it soothes the mind?
If I, indeed, could rest—(*Tastes it.*) It tastes not well:
It is a bitter drug.
Qu. Then give it me again: I'll hie to Dwina,
And get from her that which shall make it sweet.
(*She walks to the door of another apartment, but as she is about to go out,* Ethwald *hurries after her, and catches her by the arm.*)
Ethw. Thou shalt not go and leave me thus alone.
Qu. I'll soon return again, and all around thee
Is light as noon-day.
Ethw. Nay, nay, good wife! it rises now before me
In the full blaze of light.
Qu. Ha! what mean'st thou?
Ethw. The faint and shadowy forms,
That in obscurity were wont to rise

In sad array, are with the darkness fled.
But what avails the light? for now since sickness
Has press'd upon my soul, in my lone moments,
E'en in the full light of my torch-clad walls,
A horrid spectre rises to my sight,
Close by my side, and plain and palpable,
In all good seeming and close circumstance,
As man meets man.

Qu. Mercy upon us! What form does it wear?

Ethw. My murder'd brother's form.
He stands close by my side: his ghastly head
Shakes horridly upon its sever'd neck
As if new from the heads-man's stroke; it moves
Still as I move; and when I look upon it,
It looks — No, no! I can no utterance find
To tell thee how it looks on me again.

Qu. Yet, fear not now: I shall not long be absent;
And thou may'st hear my footsteps all the while,
It is so short a space. [EXIT Queen.

Ethw. (*returning to the middle of the stage.*)
I'll fix my stedfast eyes upon the ground,
And turn to other things my tutor'd thoughts
Intently. (*After pausing for a little while, with his clenched hands crossed upon his breast, and his eyes fixed upon the ground.*)
It may not be: I feel upon my mind
The horrid sense that preludes still its coming.
Elburga! ho, Elburga! (*Putting his hand before his eyes, and calling out with a strong voice of fear.*)

Enter Queen *in haste.*

Qu. Has't come again?

Ethw. No; but I felt upon my pausing soul
The sure and horrid sense of its approach.
Hadst thou not quickly come, it had ere now
Been frowning by my side. The cup, the cup.
(*Drinks eagerly.*)

Qu. Heaven grant thee peace!
Wilt thou not send unto the holy priest,
To give thee ghostly comfort?

Ethw. (*shaking his head.*) Away, away! to thee and to thy priests
I have, alas! lent too much heed already.

Qu. Let not your noble spirit thus be shent!
Still bear good heart! these charmed drugs full soon
Will make you strong and vig'rous as before;
And in the rough sport of your northern war,
You will forget these dreadful fantasies.

Ethw. Ay, thou speak'st wisely now: methinks I still,
In the embattled field, 'midst circling hosts,
Could do the high deeds of a warlike king;
And what a glorious field now opens to me!
But, oh! this cursed bar! this ill-timed sickness;
It keeps me back ev'n like a bitted steed.
But it was ever thus! What have avail'd
My crimes, and cares, and blood, and iron toil?

Qu. What have avail'd! art thou not king of Mercia?

Ethw. Ay, ay, Elburga! 'tis enough for thee
To tower in senseless state and be a queen;
But to th' expanded and aspiring soul,
To be but still the thing it long has been
Is misery, e'en tho' enthron'd it were
Under the scope of high imperial state.
O, cursed hind'rance! blasting fiends breathe on me.
Putt'st thou not something in thy damned drugs
That doth retard my cure? I might ere this
With cased limbs have strode the clanging field,
And been myself again.—Hark! some one comes.
(*Listening with alarm.*)

Qu. Be not disturb'd, it is your faithful groom,
Who brings the watch-dog; all things are secure.

Ethw. Nay, but I heard the sound of other feet.
(*Running to the door, and pushing in a great bar.*)
Say, who art thou without?

Voice without. Your groom, my Lord, who brings your faithful dog.

Ethw. (*to* Queen.) Didst thou not hear the sound of other feet?

Qu. No, only his; your mind is too suspicious.

Ethw. I in his countenance have mark'd of late
That which I like not: were this dreary night
But once o'ermaster'd, he shall watch no more.
(*Opens the door suspiciously, and enters an armed man, leading in a great watch-dog: the door is shut again hastily, and the bar is replaced.*)
(*To the dog.*) Come, rough and surly friend!
Thou only dost remain on whom my mind

Can surely trust. I'll have more dogs so train'd.
(*Looking stedfastly at the* Groom.)
Thy face is pale: thou hast a haggard look:
Where hast thou been? (*seizing him by the neck.*)
Answer me quickly! Say, where hast thou been?
Gr. Looking upon the broad and fearful sky.
Qu. What sayst thou?
Gr. The heavens are all a flaming o'er our heads,
And fiery spears are shiv'ring thro' the air.
Ethw. Hast thou seen this?
Gr. Ay, by our holy saint!
Qu. It is some prodigy, dark and portentous.
Gr. A red and bloody mantle seems outstretch'd
O'er the wide welkin, and ——
Ethw. Peace, damned fool!
Tell me no more: be to thy post withdrawn.
(Exit Groom *by a small side-door, leading the dog with him.*)
Ethw. (*to himself, after musing for some time.*)
Heaven warring o'er my head! there is in this
Some fearful thing betoken'd.
If that, in truth, the awful term is come,
The fearful bound'ry of my mortal reach,
O'er which I must into those regions pass
Of horror and despair, to take my place
With those who do their blood-earn'd crowns exchange
For ruddy circles of devouring fire;
Where hopeless woe and gnashing agony

Writhe in the dens of torment; where things be
Yet never imaged in the thoughts of man,
Dark, horrible, unknown——
I'll mantle o'er my head, and think no more.
(*Covers his head with his cloak, and sinks down upon the couch.*)
Qu. Nay, rather stretch you on the fleecy bed.
Ethw. Rest, if thou canst, I do not hinder thee.
Qu. Then truly I will lean my head a while.
I am o'erspent and weary. (*Leans on the couch.*)
Ethw. (*hastily uncovering his face.*)
Thou must not sleep: watch with me and be silent:
It is an awful hour! (*A long pause, then* Ethwald *starting up from the couch with alarm.*)
I hear strange sounds ascend the winding stairs.
Qu. I hear them too.
Ethw. Ha! dost thou also hear it?
Then it is real. (*listening.*) I hear the clash of arms.
Ho, guard! come forth.

Re-enter Groom.

Go, rouse my faithful dog:
Dark treason is upon us.
Gr. (*disappears, and then re-entering.*)
He sleeps so sound, my Lord, I cannot rouse him.
Ethw. Then, villain, I'm betray'd! thou hast betray'd me!
But set thy brawny strength against that door,
And bar them out: if thou but seem'st to flinch,
This sword is in thy heart.
(*A noise of armed men is now heard at the door, endeavouring to break it open, whilst*

Ethwald *and the* Groom *set their shoulders to it to prevent them. Enter* Dwina *hastily from an inner apartment, and with the* Queen *assists in putting their strength also to the door, as the force without increases. The door is at last broken open, and* Hereulf, *with the* Rebel Chiefs, *burst in sword in hand.*

Her. (*to* Ethwald.)
Now, thou fell ruthless lion, that hast made
With bloody rage thy native forest waste!
The spearmen are upon thee! to the strife
Turn thy rough breast: thou canst no more escape.

Ethw. Quick to thy villain's work, thou wordy coward,
Who in the sick man's chamber seek'st the fame
Thou dar'st not in th' embattled field attain!
I am prepar'd to front thee and thy mates,
Were ye twice number'd o'er. (*Sets his back to a pillar, and puts himself into a posture of defence.*)

Her. The sick man's chamber! darest thou, indeed,
Begrimed as thou art with blood and crimes
'Gainst man committed, human rights assume?
Thou art a hideous and envenom'd snake,
Whose wounded length, even in his noisome hole,
Men fiercely hunt, for love of human kind;
And, wert thou scotch'd to the last ring of life,
E'en that poor remnant of thy curs'd existence
Should be trod out i' th' dust.

Ethw. Come on, thou boasting fool! give thy sword work,
And spare thy cursed tongue.

Her. Ay, surely will I!
It is the sword of noble Ethelbert;
Its master's blood weighs down its heavy strokes;
His unseen hand directs them.

(*They fight:* Ethwald *defends himself furiously, but at last falls, and the Conspirators raise a loud shout.*)

First Ch. Bless heaven, the work is done!

Sec. Ch. Now Mercia is revenged, and free-born men
May rest their toil'd limbs in their peaceful homes.

Third Ch. (*going nearer the body.*)
Ha! does he groan?

Sec. Ch. No, he dies sullenly, and to the wall
Turns his writh'd form and death-distorted visage.

(*A solemn pause, whilst* Ethwald, *after some convulsive motions, expires.*)

Her. Now hath his loaded soul gone to its place,
And ne'er a pitying voice from all his kind
Cries, "God have mercy on him!"

Third Ch. I've vow'd to dip my weapon in his blood.

First Ch. And so have I. (*Several of them advancing with their swords towards the body, a* Young Man *steps forth, and stretches out his arm to keep them off.*)

Young Man. My father in the British wars was seiz'd

A British prisoner, and with all he had
Unto a Mercian chief by lot consign'd:
Mine aged grandsire, lowly at his feet,
Rent his grey hair: Ethwald, a youthful warriour,
Receiv'd the old man's pray'r and set him free;
Yea, even to the last heifer of his herds
Restor'd his wealth.
For this good deed, do not insult the fallen.
He was not ruthless once.

(They all draw back, and retire from the body. The Queen, *who has, during the fight, &c. remained at a distance, agitated with terrour and suspense, now comes forward to* Hereulf *with the air of one who supplicates for mercy, and* Dwina, *following close behind her, falls upon her knees, as if to beseech him in favour of her mistress.)*

Qu. If thou of good king Oswal, thine old master,
Aught of rememb'rance hast, ——

Her. I do remember:
And deeply grieve to think a child of his
Has so belied her mild and gentle stock.
Nothing hast thou to fear: in some safe place,
In holy privacy, may'st thou repent
The evil thou hast done: for know, proud dame,
Thou art beneath our vengeance.
But as for thine advisers, that dark villain,
The artful Alwy, and that impious man,
Who does dishonour to his sacred garb,
Their crimes have earn'd for them a bitter meed,
And they shall have it.

Sec Ch. Shall we not now the slumb'ring Mercians rouse,
And tell our countrymen that they are free
From the oppressor's yoke ?

Her. Yes, thou say'st well: thro' all the vexed land
Let every heart bound at the joyful tidings!
Thus from his frowning height the tyrant falls
Like a dark mountain, whose interior fires,
Raging in ceaseless tumult, have devour'd
Its own foundations. Sunk in sudden ruin
To the tremendous gulph, in the vast void
No friendly rock rears its opposing head
To stay the dreadful crash.
The joyful hinds, with grave and chasten'd joy,
Point to the traveller the hollow vale
Where once it stood, and the now-sunned cots,
Where, near its base, they and their little ones
Dwelt trembling in its deep and fearful shade.

[EXEUNT.

THE

SECOND MARRIAGE:

A COMEDY,

IN FIVE ACTS.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

MEN:

SEABRIGHT.
BEAUMONT, *a worthy clergyman, who is his friend and his brother-in-law.*
Lord ALLCREST.
Sir CRAFTY SUPPLECOAT.
PLAUSIBLE, *a schemer.*
PROWLER, *his knavish follower.*
WILLIAM BEAUMONT, *son to* Beaumont.
MORGAN, *uncle to* Seabright's *first wife.*
ROBERT.
Gardener, Sharp, *and* Servants, *&c.*

WOMEN:

Lady SARAH, *sister to* Lord Allcrest.
SOPHIA, *daughter to* Seabright.
Mrs. BEAUMONT.
PRY, Lady Sarah's *woman.*
Landlady, Servants, *&c.*

Scene: Seabright's *house in the country, not far from London, and a small country Inn near it.*

THE

SECOND MARRIAGE.

ACT I.

SCENE I. *A garden: the* Gardener *discovered at work amongst some shrubs and flowers. Enter* ROBERT *hastily, calling to him as he enters.*

ROBERT.

STOP, stop, Gardener! What are you about there? My mistress's rose-trees rooted out of her favourite nook thus! Get out of this spot with your cursed wheel-barrow! If there were one spark of a Christian in your heart, you would pluck the last hair off your bare scalp rather than root out these shrubs.

Gar. Softly and civilly, Master Robert; and answer me one question first. — If I intend to remain gardener in this family, and make my pot boil and my family thrive as I have done, whether will it be wiser in me, do you think, to obey your orders or my master's?

Rob. And did he order you to do this?

Gar. As sure as I hold this spade in my hand.

Rob. I should as soon have thought of tearing the turf from my mother's grave as of doing this thing. Well, well; perhaps he has forgot that she liked them.

Gar. Now I rather think he remember'd, when he gave me the orders, that another lady likes them not; and a dead woman's fancy match'd against a living woman's freak, with a middle-aged widower, hear ye me, who has just pull'd the black coat off his back, has but a sorry chance, Robert.

Rob. Ay, and he has pull'd the black coat too soon off his back. But away with it!—I'll think no more of what you say—it is impossible.

Gar. May I never handle a spade again, if she did not squint to this direct spot, with her horrid-looking grey eyes, the last time she walked thro' the garden, saying it was a mass of confusion that ought to be cleared away, and he gave me the orders for doing it the very next morning.

Rob. Who could have believed this? Who could have believed this but a few months ago, when she rambled thro' these walks, with all her white frock'd train gamboling round her?

Gar. Nay, good Robert, don't be so down o' the mouth about it: the loss of his wife, and an unlook'd-for legacy of twenty thousand pounds, may set a man's brains a working upon new plans. There is nothing very wonderful in that, man. He'll get his lady-wife and the borough together,

with a power of high relations, you know, and we shall all be fine folks by and bye.—Thou wilt become master-butler or gentleman-valet, or something of that kind, and I shall be head gardener, to be sure, with a man or two to obey my orders: we shan't be the same pains-taking folks that we have been, I warrant you, when he is a parliament man.

Rob. Thou'rt always looking after something for thine own advantage, and that puts all those foolish notions into thy noddle. No, no; he has lived too sweetly in his own quiet home, amongst the rustling of his own trees and the prattling of his own infants, to go now into the midst of all that shuffling and changing and making of speeches. He'll never become a parliament man.

Gar. Well, then, let him marry Lady Sarah for love, if he please; I'll neither make nor meddle in the matter. If she keep a good house, and give good victuals and drink to the people in it, I'll never trouble my head about it.

Rob. Out upon thee, man, with thy victuals and thy drink! Thou'rt worser than a hog. Well should I like, if it were not for the sake of better folks than thyself, to see thy greedy chaps exercised upon her feeding.

Gar. What, is she niggardly then, and so fine a lady, too?

Rob. Niggardly! she'll pull off her wide hoop, and all them there flounces that people go to court in, to search over the house for the value of a

candle's end, rather than any of the poor devils belonging to her should wrong her of a doit's worth. Thou'lt have rare feeding, truly, when she comes amongst us.

Gar. Heaven forbid it, then! No wonder thou'rt anxious she should not come here. I always wonder'd what made thee so concern'd about it.

Rob. And dost thou think, swine that thou art, I am concern'd for it upon this account? Thou deservest to be fed on husks and garbage all thy life for having such a thought. I, who was the friend, I may say the relation, of my good mistress (for thou knowest I am her foster-brother); and when I look upon her poor children playing about, I feel as tho' they were my own flesh and blood. It is not that I boast of the connection: God knows I am as humble as any body!

Gar. Ay, no doubt; and a rare good thing it is, this same humility. I know a poor ass, grazing on the common, not far off, that, to my certain knowledge, is foster-brother to a very great lord, and yet, I must say that for him, I never saw him prick up his ears or even shake his tail one bit the more for it in my life. By my certies! he must be a very meek and sober-minded ass!

(*Singing and gathering up his tools, &c.*)

Take this in your hand for me, man; I'm going to another part of the garden.

(*Holding out something for* Robert *to carry.*)

Rob. (*pushing away his hand angrily.*) Take care of it yourself, fool: you would sing, tho' your father were upon the gallows.

Gar. I crave your worship's pardon! I should have whined a little, to be sure, to have been better company to you. (*Looking off the stage.*) But here comes a good man who frowns upon nobody; the worthy rector of Easterdown: I'll go and bid him welcome; for he likes to see a poor fellow hold up his head before him, and speak to him like a man.

Rob. You bid him welcome, indeed! stand out of the way: I'll bid him welcome myself. He is as good as my own —— No matter what. He is married to my good mistress's sister; ay, and his own father christen'd me, too. I'm glad he is come. You go to him indeed!

Enter Mr. BEAUMONT.

O Sir! you're welcome to this sad place.

Bea. I thank you, honest Robert; how do you do?

Rob. So, so; I'm obliged to you for the favour of asking. Woe is me, Sir! but this be a sad place since you came last among us.

Bea. A sad change, indeed, my good friend, and you seem to have felt it too. You look thin and alter'd, Robert.

Rob. I ha'n't been very merry of late, and that makes a body look —— (*passing his hand across his eyes.*)

Bea. (*shaking his head.*) Ay, what must thy poor master be, then, since it is even so with thee? Poor man, it grieved me to think that I could not be with him on the first shock of his distress,

but illness and business of importance made it impossible for me to leave Yorkshire. How does he do? I hope you look cheerfully before him, and do all that you can to comfort him.

Rob. Indeed I should have been very glad, in my homely way, to have done what I could to comfort him; but, I don't know how it is, he gets on main well without, Sir.

Bea. (*surprised.*) Does he? — I'm very glad to hear it. I love him for that, now: it is a noble exertion in him; he has a great merit in it, truly.

Rob. Humph, humph. (*a pause.*)

Bea. What were you going to say, my good Robert?

Rob. Nothing, Sir; I was only clearing my throat.

Bea. How does he sleep, Robert?

Rob. I can't say, Sir, not being present when he's a-bed, you know.

Bea. How does he eat, then? Little rest and little food must, I fear, have brought him very low.

Rob. Nay, as for the matter of his eating, I can't say but I find as good a notch made in the leg of mutton, when he dines alone, as there used to be.

Bea. Well, that's good. But I fear he is too much alone.

Rob. No, Sir; he has dined out a pretty deal of late. He does, indeed, walk up and down the shady walk by the orchard, and talk to himself, often enough.

Bea. (*alarmed.*) Does he? that is a sign of the deepest sorrow: I must speak to him; I must put books into his hands.

Rob. O, Sir, there's no need of that; he has a book in his hand often enough.

Bea. And what kind of books does he read?

Rob. Nay, it is always the same one.

Bea. Well, he can't do better: there is but one book in the world that can't be too often in a man's hand.

Rob. Very true, Sir; but it is not that one tho'. I thought as you do myself, and so I slyly looked over his shoulder one morning to be sure of it; but I saw nothing in it but all about the great people at court, and the great offices they hold.

Bea. You astonish me, Robert. His heavy loss I fear has bewildered his wits. Poor man! poor man! and all the sweet children too!

Rob. Yes, Sir, they — will feel —

Bea. What would you say, my friend?

Rob. Nothing, Sir. This vile neckcloth takes me so tight round the throat, an' a plague to it!

Gar. (*coming forward with a broad grin.*) God bless you, Sir! I be glad to see you here. How does your good lady and master William do? He is grown a fine young gentleman now, I warrant: he, he, he, he, he!

Rob. (*to* Gar. *angrily.*) Can't you ask a gentleman how he does, fool, without putting that damned grin upon your face?

Bea. Why, my friend Robert, what words are these you make use of?

Rob. True, Sir, I should not have used them: but when a body is vexed he'll be angry, and when a body is angry, good sooth! he'll e'en bolt out with the first word that comes to him, though he were a saint.

Bea. Too true, Robert; but long before a body becomes a saint, he is very seldom vexed, and still seldomer angry at any thing.

Rob. God bless you, Sir, I know very well I a'n't so good as I should be, and I wish from my heart I was better.

Bea. Give me your hand, honest Robert; you will soon be better if you wish to be so, and it is a very pleasant progress when once it is fairly begun. (*Looking off the stage.*) I think I see your master at a distance. Good day to you! good day to you, Gardener. [EXEUNT *severally.*

SCENE II.

A Parlour, with a door opening into the garden. SEABRIGHT *and* BEAUMONT *are seen walking together in the garden.* BEA. *talking to* SEA. *as they enter.*

Bea. (*continuing to talk.*) I must, indeed, confess, my dear friend, you had every thing that this world can bestow; a moderate fortune, with health to enjoy it; the decent, modest tranquillity of private life, and the blessings of domestic harmony. I must, indeed, confess you were a

happy man. (*Pauses, and looks at* Sea., *who says nothing.*) Your measure of good things was complete; it was impossible to add to it; there was no more for you to desire on this side of heaven. (*Pauses again.*)

Sea. (*answering very tardily.*) I had, indeed, many of the comforts of life.

Bea. Many of the comforts of life! you had every thing the heart of man can desire: and, pardon me, you could afford to lose part of your felicity, dear as that part might be, and still retain enough to make life worth the cherishing. To watch over your rising family; to mark the hopeful progress of their minds; to foster every good disposition and discourage every bad one found there: this, my friend, is a noble, an invigorating task, most worthy of a man.

Sea. It is certainly the duty of every man to attend to the education of his children; their fortunes in the world depend upon it.

Bea. (*looking displeased at him.*) Poo! their fortunes in that world from which this will appear but like a nest of worms, a hole for grubs and chrysalises, that world which is our high and native home, depend upon it. (*Walking up and down disturbed, and then returning to* Sea. *with a self-upbraiding look.*) Forgive me, Seabright; you know I am sometimes thus, but my spark is soon extinguished. I am glad — I ought to be glad to see you so composed. It is a noble conquest you have gained over your feelings, and what must it not have cost you! Give me your

hand, and be not thus constrained with me: I know the weakness of human nature, and dearly do I sympathise with you.

Sea. You are very kind, my friend; but you have travelled far, you must want refreshment; let me order something. (*Going to the door and calling a* Servant, *to whom he gives orders.*)

Bea. (*aside.*) Well, there is something here I don't understand. But I am wrong, perhaps: some people can't bear to have the subject of their sorrow touched upon: I'll talk to him of other things. (*Aloud to* Sea. *as he returns from the door.*) Your old acquaintance, Asby of Gloucestershire, called upon me a day or two before I left home, and enquired kindly after you. He is a very rich man now; he has purchased the great estate of Carriswood, near his native place, and is high sheriff of the county.

Sea. (*becoming suddenly animated.*) What, Asby? my old school-fellow Asby? that is a great rise, by my soul! The estate of Carriswood, and high sheriff of the county! What interest has pushed him? what connexions has he made? has he speculated with his money? how has he advanced himself?

Bea. I can't very well tell you: he has gone on, like many others, turning, and scraping, and begging; and managing great people's matters for them, till he has become one of the most considerable men in that part of the country.

Sea. He must be a clever fellow. We used to think him stupid at school; but we have been dev'lishly deceived.

Bea. No, you have not, for he is stupid still. His brother, the poor curate of Crofton, is a clever man.

Sea. (*contemptuously.*) The poor curate of Crofton! one of those clever men, I suppose, who sit with their shoes down o' the heel, by their own study fire, brooding o'er their own hoard of ideas, without ever being able from their parts or their learning to produce one atom's worth of good to themselves or their families. I have known many such: but let me see a man, who from narrow and unfavourable beginnings, shapes out his own way in this changing world to wealth and distinction, and, by my faith! he will be wise enough for me.

Bea. My friend, you become animated: I am happy to see you so much interested in the fortune of others; it is a blessed disposition. I have something also to tell you of your old friend Malton, which I am sure will give you pleasure.

Sea. What, he has got a fortune too, I suppose, and is standing for the county.

Bea. No; something better than that, my friend.

Sea. Ha! well, some people get on amazingly.

Bea. It is amazing, indeed, for it was altogether hopeless. You remember his only son, the poor little boy that was so lame and so sickly?

Sea. Yes, I do.

Bea. Well, from some application, which I cannot remember at present, the sinews of his leg have recovered their proper tone again, and he is growing up as healthy a comely-looking lad as you can see.

Sea. O, that is what you meant: I am glad to hear it, certainly; a cripple in a family is not easily provided for. But pray now, let me understand this matter more perfectly.

Bea. I tell you I have forgot how they treated the leg, but —

Sea. (*impatiently.*) No, no, no! What relations, what connexions had Asby to push him? A man can't get on without some assistance. His family, I always understood, was low and distressed.

Bea. He had two or three ways of getting on, which I would not advise any friend of mine to follow him in; and the worst of them all was making what is called a convenient marriage.

Sea. (*affecting to laugh.*) Ha, ha, ha! you are severe, Beaumont. Many a respectable man has suffered interest to determine even his choice of a wife. Riches and honours must have their price paid for them.

Bea. Trash and dirt! I would not have a disagreeable vixen to tyrannise over my family for the honours of a peerage.

Sea. Well, well, people think differently upon most subjects.

Bea. They do indeed; and it is not every one who thinks so delicately, and has so much reason to do so, upon this subject, as we have, my dear Seabright. Our wives —

Sea. (*interrupting him hastily.*) And he comes in for the county, you say?

Bea. No, no, Seabright; you mistake me; high sheriff of the county, I said. How you do interest yourself in the fortunes of this man!

Sea. And what should surprise you in this? By heaven there is nothing so interesting to me as to trace the course of a prosperous man thro' this varied world! First he is seen like a little stream, wearing its shallow bed through the grass; circling and winding, and gleaning up its treasures from every twinkling rill as it passes: farther on, the brown sand fences its margin, the dark rushes thicken on its side: farther on still, the broad flags shake their green ranks, the willows bend their wide boughs o'er its course: and yonder, at last, the fair river appears, spreading its bright waves to the light!

Bea. (*staring strangely on him, then turning away some paces, and shaking his head ruefully.*) Poor man! poor man! his intellects are deranged: he is not in his senses.

Enter a Servant.

Sea. (*to* Ser.) Very well. (*To* Bea.) Let us go to the breakfast-room, Beaumont, and you'll find something prepared for you. (*As they are about to go out, the children appear at a distance in the garden.*)

Bea. (*looking out.*) Ha! yonder are the children: blessings on them! I must run and speak to them first. [Exit *into the garden to the children.*

Sea. (*to himself, looking contemptuously after* Bea.) Ay, go to the children! thou art only fit

company for them! To come here with his comfort and his condolence full eight months and a half after her death — he is a mere simpleton! His wonderful delicacy too about interested marriages! — he is worse than a simpleton! And my only business now, forsooth, must be to stay at home and become schoolmaster to my own children! He is an absolute fool. (*Turning round and seeing the* Servant *still standing at the door.*) Have you enquired at the village which of the inns my Lord Lubberford stops at on his way to town?

Ser. Yes, Sir; but they don't know.

Sea. But they must know. Go, and make farther enquiries, for I must pay my respects to his Lordship as he passes. Were the fruit and the flowers carried to Lady Sarah this morning?

Ser. I don't know, Sir.

Sea. Run to the gardener, and put him in mind of it. [EXEUNT.

SCENE III.

A Library. Enter SEABRIGHT, *who walks several times slowly across the stage, as if deeply engaged in his own mind; then stops short with a considerable pause.*

Sea. I am now upon the threshold of distinction, and with one step more I cross it. On this side lies spiritless obscurity; on that, invigorating honour. (*Pauses.*) Member of Parliament! there is magic in the words, and of most powerful operation. Let that man find a place elsewhere; why should I squeeze myself and everybody round me

to make room for him? Sir, he's a Member of Parliament.—Let that fool hold his tongue there; why do we silently listen to all his prosing stuff? Sir, he's a Member of Parliament.—What! bells ringing, children huzzaing, corporation men sweating at this rate, to welcome that poor lurking creature to your town? To be sure; he's a Member of Parliament. — Ay, so it is. I too have mixed with the ignoble crowd to stare upon men thus honoured. I have only now to overstep the bounds, and be myself the very thing I gazed at. (*Pausing again.*) There is, indeed, a toll, a price of entrance that must be paid, and my heart stands back from it; but there is no other way than this, and what I would wear I must purchase. O, it is well worth its price! To be but known and named as filling such a place in society brings pleasure with it. And in the eyes of our early friends too.—Methinks I can see at this moment every curious face in my native village gathering about the letter-boy as he sets out upon his rounds, to look with grinning admiration upon my first franks. "Free, Seabright;" ha, ha, ha! (*Laughing to himself, and rubbing his hands together with great complacency.*)

Enter ROBERT.

Sea. (*turning round shortly, like one who is caught.*) What brings you here, sirrah?

Rob. You desired me to tell you, Sir, when Miss Seabright returned from her walk.

Sea. (*with his countenance changed.*) And is she so soon returned?

Rob. Yes, Sir; and I have told her you wish to speak with her.

Sea. You have told her — I wish — I looked not for her so soon — I wish you had not —

Rob. Sir!

Sea. Begone, begone! and say I am waiting for her. (EXIT Rob. *stealing a look of observation at his master as he goes out.*) — Ah! here comes the hard pull! here comes the sticking-place! I should have prepared her for this before, but my heart would not suffer me. O that I had employed some one else to tell her! She little thinks of this! I hear her coming. (*Listening, while children's voices are heard without.*) What! she is bringing the children with her! I hear the little one prating as he goes. O God! I cannot — I cannot!

[EXIT, *running out with much agitation.*

Enter SOPHIA, *carrying a* little Boy *on her back, and an elder* Boy *and* Girl *taking hold of her gown.*

Soph. (*to the* little one.) You have had a fine ride, and a long ride, have you not?

Little One. Yesh, tit.

Soph. Come down then, boy, for your horse is tired.

Little One. No, tit.

Soph. No, tit! but you must tho'. (*Setting him down.*) Stand upon your fat legs there, and tell me what I'm to have for all this trouble of carrying you. What am I to have, urchin?

Little One. Kish.

Soph. (*after kissing him affectionately.*) And what am I to have for these comfits I have saved for you?

Little One. Kish.

Soph. (*kissing him again.*) And what am I to have for the little dog I bought for you this morning?

Little One. Kish.

Soph. What! kish again? kish for every thing? (*Kissing him very tenderly.*) O you little rogue! you might buy the whole world for such money as this, if every body loved you as I do. Now, children, papa is not ready to see us yet, I find; so in the mean time I'll divide the little cake I promised you. (*Taking a little cake from her work-bag, and dividing it; whilst* Robert, *peeping in at the door, and seeing* Seabright *not there, ventures in, and stands for a little while looking tenderly upon* Soph. *and the children.*)

Rob. God bless all your sweet faces!

Soph. What do you want here, good Robert?

Rob. Nothing — nothing. God bless you all, my pretty ones! (*Listening.*) I hear him coming. [EXIT, *looking piteously upon them as he goes off.*

Soph. I hear papa coming.

Little Girl. I'll run and meet him.

Eldest Boy. Don't, Emma; he does not like to play with us now; it is troublesome to him.

Little Girl. When mama was alive he play'd with us.

Soph. Hush! my good girl.

Enter SEABRIGHT.

We have been waiting for you, papa; Robert told us you wanted to see us all together.

Sea. Did Robert tell you so? I wanted to see you alone, Sophia; but since it is so, the others may remain. I have got something to say to you.

Soph. You look very grave, my dear Sir: have I offended you?

Eldest Boy. It was I who broke the china vase, so don't be angry with her for that.

Sea. My brave boy! it is distress, and not anger, that makes me grave.

Soph. And are you distressed, papa? O don't be distressed! we will do every thing that we can to please you. I know very well we can't make you so happy as when mama was alive; but we'll be such good children! we'll obey you, and serve you, and love you so much, if you will but play with us, and look upon us again as you used to do.

Sea. (*softened.*) My dear girl, I wish I could make you all happy: I wish to raise your situation in the world above the pitch of my present confined abilities: I wish — (*stops, and is much embarrassed.*)

Soph. (*kissing his hand.*) My dear, dear father! you say that I am your dear girl, and I promise you, you shall find me a good one. I want no better fortune in the world, than to live with you, and be useful to you. I can overlook the household matters, and order every thing in the family as you would like to have it. I want no better for-

tune than this: I shall be a happy girl and a proud girl, too, if you will put confidence in me.

Sea. (*taking her hand tenderly.*) My sweet child! this would be a dull and sombre life for a young girl like you: you ought now to be dressed and fashioned like other young people, and have the advantage of being introduced to the world by those who —

Soph. O no! I don't care whether my gown be made of silk or of linen: and as for being dull, never trouble your head about that; we shall find a way to get the better of it. Do you know, papa, — but I am almost ashamed to tell it you. —

Sea. What is it, my dear?

Soph. I have been learning to play at backgammon: for you know mama and you used to play at it of a winter evening; and I'll play with you, if you'll allow me.

Sea. O God! O God! this is too much! (*Turns from them in great agitation, and running to the opposite side of the room, stands leaning his back against the wall, whilst* Sophia *and the children gather round him.*)

Soph. My dear father! what is the matter?

Eldest Boy. Are you not well, papa?

Sea. I am well enough! I am well enough! but I have something to tell you, and I cannot tell it.

Soph. For God's sake let me know what it is!

Sea. You must know it: it is necessary that you should. I am — (*Pauses.*)

Soph. A bankrupt.

Sea. No, no, no! I am going to be married.—(Sophia *staggers some paces back, and stands like one perfectly stupified.*) What is the matter, Sophia? are you going to faint?

Soph. No, I shan't faint.

Sea. Be not so overcome with it, my dear child! it is for the good of my children I marry. (*Pauses and looks at her, but she is silent.*) You, and all children in your situation, look upon these matters with a prejudiced eye. It is my great regard for you that determines me to take this step. (*Pauses, but she is silent.*) Do you hear me? Will you not speak to me?

Soph. O my poor mother! little did I think when I kissed your cold hands, that you would so soon be forgotten!

Sea. No more of this, my dear! no more of this! It is improper; it is painful to me. I have not forgotten — I love — I respect — I adore her memory: but I am engaged—it is necessary —your interest is concerned in it, my dear children; and I know, my good Sophia, you will not add to your father's distress by stubborn and undutiful behaviour.

Soph. O no, my dear Sir! if you love and adore her memory I am satisfied. Yet, if you do, how can you — O how can you! — I will say no more: God bless you, and give you a good wife! (*Weeping.*) But she will never be so good as my mother: she will never love you as my mother did.

Sea. Forbear, my good girl! I know it very

well: and I don't marry now to be beloved. But Lady Sarah is a very good woman, and will make me as happy as I can expect to be; she is sister to Lord Allcrest, you know, and is related to the first people of the country.

Soph. Good heaven, Sir! you can't mean to marry Lady Sarah: all the world knows how ill-temper'd she is.

Eldest Boy. What that lady with the cunning-looking nose, and the strange staring eye-brows? If she come into this house, I'll cast my top at her.

Soph. Hold your tongue, George! papa is not so hard-hearted as to set such a woman over us. Come, come, children! gather round, and hold up your little hands to him: he will have pity upon you. (*The children gather round, and* Sophia, *putting the hands of the youngest child together, and holding them up, kneels down before him.*) O Sir! have pity on them! We have nobody to plead for us, and I cannot speak.

Enter ROBERT *with his face all blubbered, and throwing himself upon his knees by the children, holds up his hands most piteously.*

Rob. O, Sir!

Sea. (*bursting into a violent rage.*) What, sirrah! have you been listening at the door! Go from my presence this moment!

Soph. Dear Sir! be not angry with him!

Sea. (*putting her away.*) No, no! let us have no more of this nonsense: I have listen'd too long to it already. (*Breaks from them, and* EXIT.)

Rob. I wish my head had been cut off before I had come in with my ill-timed assistance! Curse upon my stupid pate! I deserve to be hang'd for it. (*Beating his head and grasping his hair.*) O my pretty ones! I sent you to him that you might work on his heart, for I knew what he wanted to say well enough, and yet I must needs thrust in my silly snout amongst you to mar all! For a man that can read books and cast accounts, and all that, to do such a trick! I deserve to be cudgel'd!

Soph. Don't be so angry at yourself, Robert: you meant it well, and you have always been so good to us!

Rob. Good to you! I love you like my own flesh and blood, every one of you; and if any body dare to do you wrong, I'll — no matter what. (*Clenching his fist and nodding significantly.*) He may turn me off if he please; but I'll not quit the neighbourhood: I'll watch over you, my pretty ones; and hang me if any one shall hurt a hair of your heads!

Soph. I thank you, Robert: but don't tell any body: that would not be right, you know. Come, children: you shall go with me to my own room.

[EXEUNT Sophia *and children by one side, and* EXIT Robert *by the other, looking after them with tenderness and pity.*

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

ACT II.

SCENE I. — *Before the front of* SEABRIGHT'S *House.*

Enter PLAUSIBLE *and* PROWLER.

Plau. Do you wait for me in that farther walk yonder, till I come from visiting my subject.

Pro. Well, God grant he prove a good subject! we are woundily in want of one at present.

Plau. Don't lose courage, man; there is always a certain quantity of good and of bad luck put into every man's lot, and the more of the one that has past over his head, the more he may expect of the other. Seabright has a fortune to speculate with, and some turn, as I have been told, for speculation: he is just launching into a new course of life, and I have a strong presentiment that I shall succeed with him.

Pro. Now away with your presentiments! for we have never yet had any good luck that has not come pop upon our heads like a snow-ball, from the very opposite point to our expectation: but he has got an unexpected legacy lately; and I have observed that a sum coming in this way, to a man of a certain disposition, very often plays the part of a decoy-bird to draw away from him all the rest of his money: there I rest my hopes.

Plau. Why you talk as if I were going to ruin him, instead of increasing his fortune by my advice.

Pro. I have seen ruin follow every man that has been favour'd with your advice, as constantly as the hind legs follow the fore legs of a horse, and therefore I cannot help thinking there must be some connection between them. However, I don't pretend to reason, Plausible: it might only be some part of their bad luck that happened just at those times to be passing over their heads: and they have always, in the mean time, supplied you and your humble follower with money for our immediate wants.

Plau. Well, hold your tongue, do! (*Knocks at the door, which is opened by* Robert.) Is your master at home?

Rob. Yes.

Plau. Can he be spoken with?

Rob. No, Sir, he can't see you at present.

Plau. At what hour can I see him?

Rob. I don't know, Sir.

Plau. Is he so much engaged? But you seem sad, my friend: has any thing happened? You had a funeral in the house some time ago?

Rob. Yes, Sir; but it is a wedding we have got in it at this bout.

Plau. I had the honour of calling on Mr. Seabright yesterday morning, but he was not at home.

Rob. Yes, Sir; he has been at the borough of Crockdale to be chaired, and the parish of Upperton to be married; and he returned last night —

Pro. Bridegroom and Member of Parliament!

Rob. Keep your jokes till they are asked for.

Pro. They would be stale jokes indeed, then.

Plau. (*to* Pro.) Hold your tongue, pray. (*To* Rob.) He is engaged?

Rob. Yes, Sir; he is with the bride and the company, in the garden, at breakfast.

Plau. Well, I shan't disturb him at present. — Here is a crown for you: you will recollect my face again when you see it? I'll call again very soon.

Pro. (*aside.*) Mercy upon us! the last crown we have in the world given away on such a chance! It shan't go though.

Rob. O yes, Sir, I'll recollect you.

[EXIT Plausible.

Pro. (*lingering behind.*) Don't shut the door yet. Hark you, my good Mr. John, for I know your name very well!

Rob. My name is Robert.

Pro. Yes, Robert I said.

Rob. Did you so, truly? have not I ears in my head?

Pro. Assuredly, Sir, and ears, let me tell you, that will hear good news soon, if you will be counselled by me.

Rob. Anan?

Pro. Have you never a mind to put out a little

money to advantage? a guinea or so, now, in such a way as to return to you again with fifteen or twenty of his yellow-coated brethren at his back?

Rob. Poo! with your nonsense! I have sent two or three guineas out upon such fool's errands already.

Pro. And did they come back empty-handed to you?

Rob. No, by my faith; for they never came back at all.

Pro. O lud, lud! there be such cheats in this world, they frighten honest folks from trying their fortune. I have got a crown of my own, just now, and with another crown put to it by any good-hearted fellow that would go halves with me in the profit, I have an opportunity of making a good round sum, at present, in a very honest way, that would almost make a man of me at once: but I'm sure I don't advise you to do it; for prudence is a great virtue; prudence is a very great virtue.

(*Bell rings, and* Robert *stands hesitating.*)

Rob. Hang it! a crown is no great matter after all. There it is. (*giving him the crown whilst the bell rings again.*) How that plaguy bell rings! When you get the money for me, you'll know where to call?

Pro. Never fear! when I get the money for you, I'll find my way back again, I warrant you.

[EXEUNT.

SCENE II.

A Garden, with a Temple seen at some distance, in which are discovered Lady SARAH, SOPHIA, Mr. *and* Mrs. BEAUMONT, *and* WILLIAM BEAUMONT, *as if seated after breakfast; whilst* GARDENER *and one or two of the* SERVANTS *skulk near the front of the stage, behind some bushes, looking at them.*

Gar. Bride indeed! she's as unlovely a looking piece of goods as ever I look'd upon. See how she stares at every thing about her, and curls up her nose like a girkin! I'll warrant you she'll be all thro' my kitchen grounds by-and-by, to count over my cabbages.

First Ser. Hold your tongue, man: we're too long here: see, they are all breaking up now, and some of them will be here in a trice.

[EXEUNT Servants.

(*The company come out from the temple, and* Mr. *and* Mrs. Beaumont *advance to the front of the stage, talking together earnestly.*)

Bea. (*continuing to talk.*) Nay, my dear, you are prejudiced and severe; it did not strike me that she behaved to you with so much forbidding coldness. She has an ungracious countenance to be sure, but now and then when it relaxes, she looks as if she had some good in her.

Mrs. B. Yes, Charles, you find always some good in every one of God's creatures.

Bea. And there is some good in every one of God's creatures, if you would but look for it.

Mrs. B. I'm sure those who can find it out in her have a quicker discernment than I can pretend to. How unlucky it was that we came to the house last night, without enquiring beforehand the state of the family; I thought I should have fainted when they told me of the marriage; and when I saw that creature in my sweet sister's place!

Bea. I pitied you, my dear Susan, very much, indeed I did; but it would have looked pettish and unforgiving in us to have gone away again at that late hour; and I think we must stay with them till to-morrow. For the children's sake, we must endeavour to be on good terms with them. But here come William and Sophia.

Enter WILLIAM BEAUMONT *and* SOPHIA, *talking as they enter.*

Wil. You like the yellow-streaked carnations best?

Soph. Yes, I think they are the prettiest, though we have but very few of them.

Wil. O! then I'll make our gardener sow a whole bushel of carnation-seed when I get home, that we may have a good chance, at least, of raising some of the kind you admire. And what else can I do for you, Sophy? Shall I copy some of my friend's verses for you? or send you some landscapes for your drawing book? or — did not you say you should like to have a rocking-horse for little Tony?

Soph. Indeed you are very good, cousin.

Wil. No, no! don't say that: there is no goodness at all in doing any thing for you.

Soph. (*going up to* Mrs. B. *who puts her arm affectionately round her.*) My dear aunt!

Wil. Ah, mother! see how tall she has grown since we saw her last, and how dark her hair is now.

Mrs. B. (*archly.*) You like fair hair best, I believe, William.

Wil. I like fair hair! I can't endure it!

Mrs. B. (*smiling.*) Well, well, you need not be so vehement in expressing your dislike.

Bea. Here comes Lady Sarah to join us: this at least is civil, you will confess.

Lady S. (*coming forward to join them.*) You are fond, Ma'am, I perceive, of the shade, from preferring this side of the garden. (*formally to* Mrs. B. *who coldly bows assent.*) It is a very pleasant morning for travelling, Mr. Beaumont.

Bea. Yes, Madam, it is a very pleasant morning for travelling.

Lady S. I'm sorry, however, that you will have so much dust on your road to town.

Soph. (*to* Mrs. B.) Why, you don't go to-day, aunt? I thought you were to stay longer.

Mrs. B. No, my dear, we go this morning.

(*looking significantly to* Beaumont.)

Lady S. Would not the cool of the evening be more agreeable?

Mrs. B. No, Ma'am, the coolness of this morning has been quite enough to induce us to set out immediately.

Enter Servant.

Ser. (*to* Lady S.) Some poor people from the village are come to wish your Ladyship health and happiness.

Lady S. (*ungraciously.*) I am obliged to them.—What do they mean? Ay, ay! tell them I am obliged to them. You need not wait; that is all.

[EXIT Ser. *whilst* Mrs. B. *smiles significantly to her husband.*

Soph. I wonder if my old friend, Huskins, be amongst them: I'll run and see. (*going to run out.*)

Lady S. Perhaps, Miss Seabright will do me the honour to consult me upon what friendships are proper for her to cultivate.

Mrs. B. (*seeing* Sophia *distressed.*) If your Ladyship will permit us, she shall retire with me for a little while. [EXEUNT Mrs. B. *and* Sophia.

Wil. (*aside to his father, as they are about to follow them.*) What an ugly witch it is! must we leave Sophia with her?

[EXEUNT Beaumont *and* William B., Lady Sarah *looking after them suspiciously.*

Enter SEABRIGHT.

Lady S. (*turning to him with affected sprightliness.*) So you have been upon the watch, I suppose, and will not suffer me to stroll thro' these shady walks alone: I am positively to have no time to myself.

Sea. You don't call me an intruder, I hope?

Lady S. Indeed, if you become very troublesome, I don't know what I may call you. He, he, he!

(*laughing foolishly.* Seabright *putting his hand up to the side of her hat, she pushes it away with pretended coyness.*) How can you be so childish? he, he, he!

Sea. (*gravely.*) Won't you let me pick a caterpillar from your ribband?

Lady S. (*looking foolish and disappointed.*) O! is that it? I am much obliged to you: but you are always so good, so tenderly attentive to me! Indeed this little hand was well bestowed upon you, Seabright: I wish it had conveyed to you a better gift when it gave away myself. (*thrusting out a great brown hand to him.*)

Sea. (*raising it to his lips with affected tenderness.*) What could it possibly convey, my dear Lady Sarah, more—(*stopping short as he is about to kiss it.*) Is that a family ring upon your finger?

Lady S. Yes, it was my mother's: why so?

Sea. The arms of the Highcastles are upon it; Lord Highcastle then is your relation?

Lady S. I am nearly related to him.

Sea. (*with his countenance brightening.*) I did not know this: by my soul, I am glad of it! He is in credit with the minister: you are on good terms with him, I hope.

Lady S. Yes, I have always taken pains to be upon terms with him.

Sea. I dare say you have; I dare say you have: you have so much prudence, and so many good qualities, my dear love! (*kissing her hand with great alacrity.*)

Lady S. O! it is all your blind partiality! (*put-*

ting her hand tenderly upon his shoulder.) Do you know, my dear Mr. Seabright, that coat becomes you very much: I wish you would always wear that colour.

Sea. I'll wear any thing you like, my dear. But, by-the-bye, my constituents at Crockdale have a manufacture of woollen in the town: I must buy two or three hundred yards of their stuff from them, I believe, lest I should have occasion to be elected again.

Lady S. (*taking her hand eagerly off his shoulder.*) Two or three hundred yards of stuff from them! Why the cheapest kind they make is eighteenpence-halfpenny a yard: only consider what that will come to.

Sea. No very great sum!

Lady S. I am surprised to hear you say so. Now I should think, if you were to send the mayor and aldermen a haunch of venison now and then when it comes in your way, and the earliest information of any great public events that may occur, it would be a more delicate and pleasing attention.

Sea. Well, well, my dear Lady Sarah, don't let us fall out about it.

Lady S. I am perfectly good humoured, I assure you; but you are so ———

Sea. Yonder is your maid coming to speak to you, I'll leave you.

Lady S. Indeed she has nothing to say: I won't suffer her to break in upon our tender conversation.

Sea. But I must go to give directions about accommodating Lord Allcrest and his friend. They will be here soon.

Lady S. Nay, there you have no occasion to give yourself any trouble : leave every thing of that kind to me : you are too profuse, and too careless, in every thing.

Sea. I may at least go to the stables, and give my groom orders to provide oats for their horses.

Lady S. I have a very good receipt in my receipt-book for feeding horses upon the refuse of a garden.

Sea. (*shaking his head, and breaking away from her.*) No, no ! that won't do. [EXIT.

Enter PRY *with a busy face.*

Lady S. What brings you here, Pry ? Did not you see Mr. Seabright with me ?

Pry. I protest, my Lady, I have been looking at so many things this morning, I can't tell what is before my eyes.

Lady S. You have looked over every thing then as I desired you : and I hope you have done it as if it were to satisfy your own curiosity.

Pry. To be sure, my Lady; and I might say so with truth too, for nothing does my heart so much good as looking thro' all them there places. And, O dear, my Lady ! the chests and the wardrobes, and the larders, and the store-rooms, that I have look'd into ! but that cunning fellow, Robert, would not let me into the wine-cellar though.

Lady S. And you are sure you let them understand, it was all to please your own curiosity?

Pry. To be sure; and I was glad I could speak the truth too, for I never does tell a lie but when I cannot get a turn served without it. I remember, my Lady, you told me long ago that this was the best rule; and I have always held you up, my Lady, for an ensample. Lord have mercy upon their souls, that will tell you over a pack of lies for no other purpose but to make people laugh! And there is all your writers of books too, full of stories from one end to the other, what will become of them, poor sinners?

Lady S. Never trouble your head about them: what have you seen?

Pry. O dear me! the sheets and the table-linen, and the pickles, and the sweetmeats, and the hams, and the bacon, that I have seen!

Lady S. Indeed, Pry!

Pry. But do you know, my Lady, there is a curious place in the house.

Lady S. What is it, pray?

Pry. A closet where they keep cordials for poor people.

Lady S. (*sourly.*) Humph.

Pry. It was kept for that purpose by the late Mrs. Seabright, and this young lady, I am told, is as fond of it as her mother was.

Lady S. Humph — every body has some maggot or other.

Pry. Certainly, my Lady, but this is a very strange one though. For you must know, my Lady, I thought no harm just to taste one of the bottles myself, thinking it might be some pennyroyal-water or blackberry-wine, or such things as charitable ladies give away; but I protest it is as good liquor as any gentlewoman would choose to keep for her own use.

Lady S. I believe it has run in your head, Pry?

Pry. No, no, my Lady; whatever I may do by myself, when I have a pain in my stomach, or such like, for nobody can help afflictions when it pleases heaven to send them, I never takes more than is creditable before people. — And, O my Lady! the pans of milk, and the butter, that I have seen in the dairy! And I assure you, my Lady, the servants make good use of it: they make spare of nothing: the very kitchen-maids have cream to their tea.

Lady S. Well, well; we shall see how long this rioting will last.

Pry. And I have been in the garden and the orchard too — But stop! I hear a noise in the bushes.

Lady S. (*looking round alarmed.*) Why did you talk so loud, you gossiping fool? Come with me into the house.

[EXEUNT Lady Sarah *and* Pry, *looking round alarmed.*

Enter GARDENER, *creeping from amongst the bushes, and shaking his fist, and making faces after them.*

Gar. I have been in the garden and the orchard too! hang'd jade! we shall see who comes off winner at last. [EXIT.

SCENE III.

Enter SEABRIGHT *followed by* ROBERT.

Sea. (*speaking as he enters.*) And he'll call again, you say? His name is Plausible?

Rob. Yes, Sir; he is a very grave, sensible looking man.

Sea. And has nobody else called?

Rob. No, Sir.

Sea. No letters for me?

Rob. No, Sir.

Sea. Nobody applying for franks?

Rob. No, Sir.

Sea. (*aside.*) Stupid dolts! (*aloud.*) So much the better. Be in the way when I call for you. (EXIT Robert.) Well, this is strange enough: nobody soliciting; nobody coming to pay their court to me; nobody asking me even for a frank: it is very strange! (*After musing some time.*) Ha! but there is a bad spirit in men, which makes them always unwilling at first to acknowledge the superiority of him who has been more nearly on a level with themselves. It is only when they see him firmly established, and advancing in the path of honours, that they are forced to respect

him. (*After walking across the stage proudly.*) And they shall see me advance. I am not a man to stop short at such beginnings as these, after the high connections I have made: I feel that I am born for advancing. The embarrassment of public affairs at present, offers my activity a fair field for exertion. (*A great noise and clamour heard without.*) What is that? Who waits there?

Enter ROBERT.

What a cursed clamour and noise is this I hear?

Rob. Only my Lady, Sir, who has been all over the house with Mrs. Pry, and laying down some prudent regulations for the family.

Sea. And what have the servants to say to that?

Rob. A pretty deal, Sir: they are no wise mealy mouthed about the matter; and they're all coming to your Honour with it in a body.

(*The noise without still coming nearer.*)

Sea. Don't let the angry fools come to me; I'll have nothing to do with it. Go, tell them so.

Rob. Very well, Sir; I'll be sure to tell them, he, he, he!

Sea. What, sirrah! is it a joke for you?

Rob. I did'nt laugh, Sir.

Sea. (*very angry.*) But you did, you damn'd fool!

(*Voices without.*) I'll tell his Honour of it, that I will. His Honour is a good master, and has always kept his house like a gentleman.

Sea. Did not I tell you not to let those angry ideots come to me? [EXIT *by the opposite side*

from the noise, in great haste, whilst Robert *pushes back the crowd of servants, who are seen pressing in at the door.*

Rob. Get along all of you! his Honour won't be disturb'd. [EXEUNT; *a great clamour heard as they retire.*

SCENE IV.

Lady SARAH's *Dressing-room.* *Enter* Lady SARAH, *followed by* SOPHIA, *carrying a work-basket in her hand, which she sets upon a work-table, and sits down to work.*

Lady S. (*sitting down by her.*) Now I hope, Miss Seabright, I may flatter myself with having more of your company this morning than you generally favour me with. If Lord Allcrest does not come at an early hour, we shall have time for a good deal of work. When a young lady is industrious, and is not always reading nonsensical books, or running up and down after children, or watering two or three foolish flower-pots on her window, she can do a great many things for herself, that enable her to appear better dressed than girls who are more expensive. (*pausing.*) You don't answer me.

Soph. Indeed, Ma'am, I had better not, for I don't know what to say.

Lady S. You are a very prudent young lady, indeed, to make that a reason for holding your tongue.

Soph. It is a reason, indeed, which elder ladies do not always attend to.

Lady S. What gown is that you have put on to-day? It makes you look like a child from the nursery. Mr. Supplecoat is to accompany Lord Allcrest, who is a very promising young man, of good expectations, and I could have wished you had dressed to more advantage. There is a young friend of mine, scarcely a year older than yourself, who is just going to be married to one of the best matches in the country; and it is of great importance to have a daughter of a large family well and early settled in life.

Soph. (*looking very much surprised.*) O how different! My poor mother used to say, that young women ought not to be married too early, but wait till they had sense to conduct themselves at the head of a family.

Lady S. Some of them would wait till they were pretty well wrinkled then.

Soph. It must be confessed that some, who do wait till they are pretty well wrinkled, are fain at last to marry without it. (*Voices heard without.*)

Lady S. (*rising quickly.*) It is my brother's voice: he is come early.

Enter SEABRIGHT, LORD ALLCREST, *and* SIR CRAFTY SUPPLECOAT.

Lady S. My dear brother, I am rejoiced to see you. (*Holding out her hand to* Lord Allcrest, *who salutes her, and then curtseying very graciously to* Sir Crafty.)

Lord A. I am happy to see you look so well, sister.

Sir C. Lady Sarah looks as a bride ought to look, fair and cheerful.

Lady S. And Mr. Supplecoat talks as a courtier ought to talk: I need not say how.

Lord A. I beg pardon; let me have the pleasure of introducing Sir Crafty Supplecoat to your Ladyship.

Lady S. Every new honour that Sir Crafty acquires must give me pleasure. And permit me to introduce to your Lordship, Mr. Seabright's — I mean my daughter, who has many good qualities to make her worthy of your esteem. (*Presenting* Sophia *to* Lord All. *and then to* Sir Crafty; *who afterwards modestly shrinks back behind* Lady S.)

Sea. (*aside to* Lady S. *pulling her by the sleeve.*) What, is he made a baronet?

Lady S. (*aside.*) Yes.

Sea. (*aside.*) A baronet, not a knight?

Lady S. (*aside.*) No, no; a baronet, certainly.

Sea. (*aloud.*) Permit me again to say how happy I am to see your Lordship in this house: I hope you and Sir Crafty will not run away from us so soon as your letter gave us reason to fear.

Lord A. You are very obliging, my good Sir; but my time, as you may suppose, is of some little importance at present, and not altogether at my own command.

Sir C. His Lordship's time has been so long devoted to the public, that he begins to believe it has a right to it.

Lord A. (*affecting humility.*) Why, I have been placed, without any merit of my own, in a situation which gives my country some claims upon me: ever since the time of Gilbert, third Earl of Allcrest, the chiefs of my family have pursued one uniform line of public conduct.

Sir C. For which they have been rewarded with one uniform stream of ministerial approbation. Changes of men and of measures have never been able to interrupt the happy and mutual uniformity.

Lord A. I believe, indeed, without the imputation of vanity, I may boast of it. The imputation of pride I am not so anxious to avoid: it more naturally attaches itself to that dignified stability; that high integri — I mean that public virt — I should say — (*Mumbling, indistinctly, to himself.*) which my family has been conspicuous for.

Sir C. Pride is a fault that great men blush not to own: it is the ennobled offspring of self-love; though, it must be confessed, grave and pompous vanity, like a fat plebeian in a robe of office, does very often assume its name.

Lord A. Ha, ha! Sir Crafty, you have a pleasant imagination: one can see that you sometimes read books.

Sir C. I would rather follow your example, my Lord, in the more agreeable study of men. No; I very seldom take a book in my hand, unless it be patronised by some great name, or have the honour, as has been the case with one of our best works lately, to be dedicated to your Lordship.

Lord A. I am obliged to you, Supplecoat; I am sure I am very happy if a name of so little importance as mine can be of any use to the learned world: we all owe learning a great deal.

Sir C. I am sure the patronage of your Lordship's name is a full recompence to learning for all the obligations you owe her.

Lord A. (*bowing graciously, and then turning to* Seabright, *as if modestly to interrupt the stream of his own praise.*) Mr. Seabright, I must have a conversation with you in your library, when you can bestow as much leisure upon me. Most of our elections are already decided, and the ensuing parliament bids fair to be as united and as meritorious as its predecessor. In those places where I have the honour to possess some little influence, the constitution, the government, or ministry—that is to say the same thing, you know, will find hearty and zealous supporters: I think I may depend at least on the member for Crockdale. (*Bowing.*)

Sea. I hope I shall always be found to merit the friendship and alliance I have the honour of bearing to your Lordship.

Lord A. (*drawing back coldly.*) Friendship is always the strongest tie, Mr. Seabright: indeed the only one that is now held in any consideration, or indeed ever mentioned.

Sea. (*mortified, and drawing back also.*) I am ready to attend you, my Lord, whenever you please: I shall have the honour of shewing you the way to my library.

Lord A. I am infinitely obliged to you. Will you go with us too, Sir Crafty? You have a list of the voters for Underwall in your pocket. The ladies will excuse us. [EXEUNT Lord All. Sir Crafty, *and* Sea. *who goes out with them, and re-enters almost immediately.*

Sea. (*to* Lady S.) His Lordship sent me back to borrow your spectacles.

Lady S. Spectacles! I use no such thing.

Sea. He says you do.

Lady S. O yes, there is a particular kind which I sometimes look through to examine any thing very minutely.

(*After receiving the spectacles and going to the door, he suddenly stops and turns back.*)

Sea. But is it your brother's interest that has made Supplecoat a baronet?

Lady S. I dare say it is.

Sea. Yes, yes, I make no doubt of it.

[EXIT, *hurrying away.*

Lady S. (*to* Soph. *angrily.*) What made you, child, skulk behind backs so, like a simpleton? —You can be fluent enough when there is no occasion for it, and when you ought to speak you have not a word to say for yourself. This is true nursery breeding.

Soph. Indeed, Madam, you may thank yourself for it; for after what you said to me, before they arrived, about Sir Crafty Supplecoat and marrying, I could not bear to look at him; and every time he looked at me, I felt strange and

mortified, just as if I had been set there to be looked at. He is the most disagreeable man I ever saw in my life.

Lady S. Don't be uneasy; you have little chance, I'm afraid, of being molested by him. But I forget; I must write to my friend, Mrs. Cudimore; her husband is in credit now, and I have been too negligent a correspondent. [EXIT.

Soph. (*sighing deeply.*) O dear! O dear! O dear me! she sleeps quietly under the green sod that I would right gladly lie down beside.

[EXIT *sorrowfully.*

SCENE V.

A small Room, with Sophia's *books and music, and flower-pots, &c. set in order. Enter* SOPHIA *very sorrowful, leaning upon* Nurse.

Soph. O my dear nurse, you are our best friend; and so she is going to send you away from us.—What will become of the poor children now? What will become of us all by-and-by? And my father, too, even my father? Oh, how it grieved me to see him courting that proud Lord, who seems ashamed to consider him as a brother-in-law! To see even my father looked down upon —it goes to my heart.

Nurse. Let him take what he gets, an' a murrain to him! he had no business to bring her here to torment us all, after the dear lady we have lost. But dry up your tears; we'll be revenged upon her: there is not a creature in the house that has not swore it: we'll be revenged upon her.

Soph. What do you mean, nurse?

Nurse. I must not tell you, my dear young lady; it is not proper that you should know any thing of it: but all the servants are joined in a plot, and they'll damp her courage, I warrant ye; they'll scare her finely.

Soph. (*skipping and clapping her hands.*) O, I shall be so glad to have her well scared! And I wish they would steal that nasty dog of her's, for she is kind to no living creature but it.

Nurse. Nay, to give the devil his due, I believe she is growing fond of little Tony.

Soph. Little Tony?

Nurse. Yes, indeed: it is strange enough; but the other day as she passed through the hall, we were all looking sourly enough upon her, no doubt; when, what possessed the child I don't know, but he held out his arms to her, and smiled.

Soph. Nasty little toad! to hold out his arms to her.

Nurse. And, would you believe it, she took him in her arms, kissed him very kindly, and has taken to him wonderfully ever since.

Soph. And do you think she really loves him?

Nurse. Upon my honest word I do.

Soph. O, then, don't let them do any harm to her; don't let them take any revenge upon her; if she love Tony I would not have her hurt.

Nurse. O, but she loves none of the rest; she is as hard as a millstone to the other two. O la! here comes that fine Sir Crafty, as they call him:

I wonder what can bring him here: can he be coming after you, Miss Sophy? (*With a significant smile.*)

Soph. Now don't say so, nurse, for you know I can't bear it.

Enter SIR CRAFTY SUPPLECOAT, *advancing to* Sophia *with a very courteous smiling face, whilst she shrinks back, and keeps close to* Nurse.

Soph. (*aside.*) O don't go, nurse.

Sir C. Lady Sarah has had the goodness, Miss Seabright, to send you a very willing messenger, who is happy to find any pretence in the world to present himself before you.

Nurse. (*aside to* Soph.) It is just as I said. (*Aloud to* Sir C.) Meaning yourself, Sir?

Sir C. Yes; well guessed, nurse! you are cunning enough, I see: you have the true sagacity about you that becomes your occupation; and I doubt not that your young lady has profited by your very instructive society. Now that you have found out the messenger, perhaps Miss Seabright herself may guess what his errand is.

(*With an affected smile.*)

Nurse. (*aside to* Sophia, *who shrinks back still more.*) Ay, it is very like courting, I assure you.

Sir C. (*advancing as she recedes.*) Will not Miss Seabright do me the honour to bestow one thought upon it? I cannot doubt of her ability to guess my errand, if she will have the condescension.

Nurse. (*aside to* Soph.) Yes, yes, it is the very thing: I have heard many a courtship begin after this fashion.

Soph. (*to* Sir C., *very much embarrassed and frightened.*) I—I—I'm sure I don't know.

Sir C. (*still advancing towards her as she recedes, with a more intolerable leer on his face.*) Nay, do have the goodness to give me this proof of the skill you have acquired in this refined academy of improvement, and tell me on what errand I am come.

Soph. (*becoming angry.*) I'm sure I don't know, unless it be to make a fool of me, and I don't think I need to stay any longer for that purpose. (*Runs out.*)

Nurse. (*running after her.*) Don't run away, Miss Sophy: he is a good-looking gentleman, and very civil spoken, too. [EXIT.

Sir C. (*looking after them.*) Ha, ha, ha!

Enter SHARP *at the side by which they have gone out.*

Sharp. You are merry, Sir: I believe I can guess what amuses you.

Sir C. I dare say thou can'st, Sharp: it is easy enough to see what they have got into their foolish heads. Ha, ha, ha! does the political Lady Sarah think to put off her troublesome nursery girl upon Crafty Supplecoat? But let me encourage the mistake for a little, it will strengthen my interest with Lord Allcrest, which at present is necessary to me. Thou understand'st me, Sharp.

Sharp. Yes, yes, Sir; and you'll have little trouble in keeping it up: for the servants, thanks to Mrs. Pry's gossiping, who is in her lady's

secrets, have got it so strongly into their heads, that if you but pick up the young lady's glove when she drops it, they think you are putting a ring on her finger.

Sir C. I thank thee, Sharp; and if thou can'st at any time pick up, in thine own way, any information that may be useful to me, thou shalt not go without thy reward. And how does the young lady like her stepmother's scheme? hast thou heard them talk about that?

Sharp. Nay, they say she dislikes it very much, and is deucedly shy about it.

Sir C. (*smiling conceitedly.*) Poo, poo, poo! she must be allowed to have her little management as well as older people: deceit is inherent in the human mind. I came here at Lady Sarah's desire, to request that she would bring her music-book into the drawing-room, and play to us; and she took it into her head — but what brought you here to seek me? Is the horse-dealer come to look at my ponies?

Sharp. Yes, Sir.

Sir C. Then I must go to him. [EXIT Sir Crafty, *whilst* Sharp *remains behind, musing, as if in serious thought about something.*

Enter ROBERT, *in a great rage.*

Rob. Aye! what damn'd tricks are you thinking of? I have overheard, at the door here, all that you and your vile master have been saying. My young lady to be made a fool of for his con-

veniency, indeed! She's a match for a better man than him any day in the year; there is not a lord of the land too good for her. But I'll be revenged upon him, vile serpent that he is! I'll be revenged upon him!

Sharp. Well, don't be so loud, my good Robert, and you will perhaps be satisfied. He has twice promised to get me a place or to raise my wages for me, and if he break his word with me a third time, — I know what. Come man, let us go and have a glass together. [EXEUNT.

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

ACT III.

SCENE I. *A small country inn near* Seabright's *house. Enter* BEAUMONT, MORGAN, *and* WILLIAM BEAUMONT.

Bea. (*to* Mor.) Well, my good Sir, how do you like travelling once more a little easy forenoon's journey in your native country?

Mor. Every thing in my native country is pleasant to me, or at least ought to be so; but I don't know; I return to it again like a dog to a deserted house; he begins to wag his tail at the threshold, but there is nobody to welcome him in; there is another generation grown up, that knows not me; there is nothing but young people now in the world.

Bea. But those young people will love and esteem you, and honour you. The caresses even of cheerful infancy go very kindly to an old man's heart. Come, come! you shall see the promising family your niece has left behind her, and your heart will warm to them. Seabright has, I fear, set an ungracious step-mother over their head; but she, perhaps, looks more so than she is. — Here comes our landlady.

Enter Landlady.

Good morning, Mrs. Thrifty.

Land. (*to* Bea.) O Sir! I be glad to see you!

Bea. I thank you, good landlady: take good care of my wife.

Land. That I will, Sir! she's in the green chamber, giving orders to her maid. And this young gentleman is your son, I suppose. (*Turning and curtesying to* Will.)

Bea. Yes, my good ma'am.

Land. Blessings on him! Ay, if he be like his father, the blessings of the widow and the helpless will rest upon him. — You are going to the 'Squire's, I suppose?

Bea. Yes, landlady; how does the family do?

Land. O lud, Sir! what an alter'd family it be! the servants a-grumbling; the lady a-scolding; the 'Squire himself going up and down like a man possess'd, as they tell me, and can't sleep in his bed o' nights for writing to dukes and lords and such like, and tormenting himself, poor man, just to be made a Sir or a Knight, or some nonsense or other of that kind: — and then all the poor children; it grieves me to see them like so many chickens that have got no dam to gather them together, tho' I'm sure that dear good young lady does all that she can for them. I sees her every morning from the room overhead, which overlooks their garden, walking with them as if she were the mother of them all, tho' I warrant you she's soon snubb'd into the house again: O, it grieves me to see them!

Will. (*eagerly.*) In the room overhead did you say? and in the morning? about this time?

Land. I don't know if just at this very time.

Will. I dare say she is. (*Going out eagerly.*)

Bea. But you wanted to read that paragraph about your friend, William, and here is the newspaper just come.

Will. (*impatiently.*) O hang it! not now: I don't care if I never read it. [EXIT *quickly.*

Bea. (*to* Land.) And he can't sleep in his bed, they say, for writing letters to great people?

Land. Yes, Sir, so they say; but there may be other reasons for a man not resting in his bed.

Bea. And what other reasons may there be?

Land. Sir, my grandfather was sexton of the parish, and would have thought nothing of digging you a grave in a dark winter evening, or ringing the church bell in the middle of the night, with never a living creature near him but his dog and his lantern, and I have myself sat up with dead corpses ere now, and I can't but say they always lay very quietly when I was with them; therefore I'm not a very likely person, you know, to give heed to foolish stories about ghosts and such like. Howsomever, the servants say that they hear strange noises since their new lady came home; and some of them swears that they have heard their late lady's footsteps walking along the hall in the middle of the night, as plainly as when she was alive.

Bea. That is strange enough, landlady.

Land. To be sure it is, Sir, but what shall we say against it? for if misers come back to the world again to look after their gold, why may not a mother come back to it again to look after her children, oppressed by a hard-hearted step-mother?

Bea. Indeed, it would be difficult in this case to gainsay it. But let us have coffee in the next room, I pray you, as soon as you can.

Land. Immediately, Sir. [EXIT Landlady.

Bea. This is a strange untoward account that our good landlady gives us of the family. One can find out, however, that domestic comfort is no more the lot of poor Seabright — but we shall see when we go to him what state he is in.

Mor. You will see yourself then, for I shan't go to him at all.

Bea. No! don't say so, my good friend: he was an affectionate husband to your niece, and an indulgent father to her children. (Mor. *shakes his head.*) When his wife died, his old habits were broken up; he is of an aspiring disposition; a high alliance and a borough presented themselves to him, and he fell into the snare. (Mor. *still shakes his head.*) He has married a woman who is narrow-minded naturally; but that disposition has been strengthened by circumstances: she has long been left, as a single woman, to support high rank upon a very small income, and has lived much with those to whom begging and solicitations are no disgrace: differently circum-

stanced she might have been more respectable, and when differently circumstanced she may become so.

Mor. Go to him thyself, Beaumont: I am an old man; my life's bark has been long buffeted about on a stormy sea, and I have seen cruel sights. I do not look upon my fellow-men with the same gentle eye as thou dost: I cannot love them myself, but I love thee because thou dost it: so e'en take me home to thine own house! no other house will I enter; and let me have an arm-chair by thy fire-side to end my days in, where I may sit at my ease, and grumble at the whole human race.

Bea. No, no! you shall see all your relations; and love them too, and do what is right by every one of them.

Mor. Do it for me then: I can't be troubled with it. Take my fortune into your own hands, and dispose of it as you please.

Bea. No; you shall do it yourself; and the blessings of those you bestow it upon shall fall on your own head undivided and unintercepted.

Mor. I will take the simplest and shortest way of settling my fortune; I'll give it all to your son.

Bea. (*Stretching himself up with a proud smile.*) Yes, if he will have it.

Enter WILLIAM B. *with great animation.*

Will. I've seen her, father! I've seen her!

Bea. Who have you seen?

Will. My cousin Sophy: she is in the garden just now with all the children about her; and they have pulled off her hat in their play, and she looks so pretty—I—I mean good-humour'd, and —

Bea. (*smiling.*) There is no harm in calling her pretty, William. — But Mr. Morgan has got something very serious to say to you: he wishes to settle his fortune upon you.

Mor. Yes, my brave William, every shilling of it.

Will. What! and Sophia and all the little Seabrights, who are as nearly related to you, to have nothing!

Mor. It shall be all your own.

Will. (*with great vehemence.*) Hang me, then, if I take one sixpence more than my own share!

Mor. Ah! I see how it is: I am a blasted tree from which no sapling shoots: my grey hairs are despised.

Will. O say not so, my good Sir! (*Bending one knee to the ground, and kissing the old man's hand.*) I will bow my head as affectionately beneath your blessing as the most dutiful child. But you shall have many children to respect and love you! and one of them—O you shall see one of them that will make your heart leap with pleasure. (*Hurrying away.*)

Bea. Where are you going in such haste?

Will. Never mind; I'll soon return. [EXIT.

Mor. (*to* Bea. *who looks significantly to him.*)

Yes, my friend, he was sent to you from Him who has given you many blessings.

Bea. But none like this. (*Fervently.*) He is a brave and upright spirit, passing with me thro' this world to a better. When he was but so high, yea, but so high, how his little heart would spurn at all injustice!

Enter Mrs. Beaumont.

Mrs. B. Where is William?

Bea. He is gone over the way, I believe, to fetch Sophia here.

Mrs. B. I'm glad of that: I came here only to see her, and I will never enter Seabright's door again as long as I live.

Bea. "As long as I live," my dear, is a phrase of very varied significations: it means the term of an angry woman's passion, or a fond woman's fancy, or a ——

Mrs. B. Or a good man's simplicity, Mr. Beaumont. Do you think I will ever enter the house where that woman is the mistress; unfeeling, indelicate, uncivil?

Bea. But she won't squander his fortune, however, and that is a good thing for the children.

Mrs. B. Poo, Mr. Beaumont! the wickedest creature on earth has always your good word for some precious quality or other.

Bea. Well, my dear, and the wickedest creature in the world always has something about it that shews whose creature it is — that shews we were all meant for a good end; and that there is a

seed—a springing place—a beginning for it, in every body.

Mrs. B. It is a very small speck with her, then, I'm sure, and would elude any body's search but your own.

Bea. Now, Mr. Morgan, don't think hardly of my wife's disposition, because she is angry at present: I assure you she is a very good woman, and has an excellent heart: she is in all things better than myself, tho' I'm of a more composed disposition.

Mrs. B. (*softened.*) My dear Beaumont! I chide you as a child, and I honour you as a man! But no more of this.—Does William tell Sophia that she is to meet her great-uncle here?

Mor. I hope he will not: I should wish to be unknown for some time, that I may observe and determine for myself, since you will make me act for myself.

Bea. Go, then, into the next room with Mrs. Beaumont: I'll wait for them here, and if he has not told her already, I'll desire him to conceal it. I hear them coming.

[EXEUNT Mrs. B. *and* Morgan.

Enter WILLIAM B. *leading in* SOPHIA.

Soph. But who are you taking me to see?

Will. You shall know by-and-bye.—But do stop a moment, Sophy, and pull back the hat a little from your face: you look best with it so. (*Stopping and putting her hat to rights.*) That will do. — And throw away that foolish basket out of your hands; (*taking a flower-basket from her, in*

which she seems to have been gathering rose-leaves, and throwing it away ;) and pray, now, hold up your head a little better.

Soph. But what is all this preparation for?

(Bea. *who had retired to the bottom of the stage, unobserved by them, now advances softly behind* Soph. *and makes a sign to* William *to be silent.*)

Will. You are to see somebody that loves you very much, and likes to see you look well, you know ; you are to see your aunt.

Soph. But there is somebody else you told me of.

Will. Yes, there is an old connection of ours with her ; and pray now, Sophy, look pleasantly upon him ; for he is an old man, and has met with misfortunes ; he has been in foreign countries; he has been in prisons, and has had chains on his legs.

Soph. O then, I am sure I shall look upon him kindly !

[EXEUNT Soph. *and* Will., *followed at a distance by* Beaumont.)

SCENE II.

A large room in SEABRIGHT*'s house.* Lady SARAH *is discovered sitting by a table writing, near the bottom of the stage.*

Lady S. There is so much light thrown across my paper here, it makes me almost blind. Who's there? is it you, Pry?

Enter PRY *from the adjoining room.*

Pry. Yes, my lady ; I sits in this room here pretty often, for the servants are vulgar and rude

to me, and my own room is so lonesome I can't bear to be in it. Not that I hear any of them noises, excepting in the night-time; yet I can't help thinking of it all day long when I am alone. —First it comes to my door, "lowe, lowe, lowe!" just like a great bull: then it comes presently after, "scrie, scrie, scrie!" just like a raven, or a cock, or a cat, or any of those wild animals; and then for the groans that it gives — O! an old jack that has not been oil'd for a twelvemonth is a joke to it.

Lady S. (*gravely.*) Remove this table for me to the other end of the room: it is too much in the sun here. (Pry *removes the table near the front of the stage, and* Lady S. *sits down to write again without speaking; then looking up, and seeing* Pry *still by her.*) Leave me.

Pry. I'm just going, my lady: I believe I told you, my lady, that Robert tells me, the vicar always expects the present of a new gown and cassock when he is sent for to lay a ghost in any genteel house.

Lady S. Leave me, I say; I'll hear no more of that nonsense at present.

[Exit Pry, *and enter* Seabright.

Sea. What has that absurd creature been chatting about?

Lady S. Still about those strange noises.

Sea. I thought so: every noise is a thief or a ghost with her. Who are you writing to?

Lady S. I am writing to Lady Puler, to beg she will have the goodness to send me a few lines

by return of post, to let me know how her rheumatism does: her husband, you know, may have it in his power to serve you.

Sea. (*nodding.*) That is very right, my dear.

Lady S. And here is a letter I have just written to Lady Mary Markly: she is a spiteful toad, and I never could endure her; but she is going to be married for the third time to a near relation of the minister's, and it will be proper in me, you know, to be very much interested in her approaching happiness.

Sea. Yes, perfectly right, my dear Lady Sarah; I won't interrupt you. (*Sits down.*)

Lady S. Indeed, my dear Seabright, I have been in the habit of studying these things, and I know how to make my account in it. If people would but attend to it, every acquaintance that they make, every letter that they write, every dinner that they give, might be made to turn to some advantage.

Sea. (*hastily, with marks of disgust.*) No, no! that is carrying it too far!

Lady. S. Not at all, Mr. Seabright! I sent a basket of the best fruit in your garden this morning even to old Mrs. Pewterer, the mayor of Crockdale's mother-in-law, and I dare say it won't be thrown away.

Sea. (*smiling.*) Well that, however, was very well thought of. But I interrupt you. (*She continues to write, and he sits musing for some time, then speaking to himself.*) A baronet of Great Britain and seven thousand a-year! (*Smiling to himself.*)

Ay, that would be a resting place at which I could put up my horses, and say I have travell'd far enough. A baronet of Great Britain, and seven thousand a-year!

Lady S. (*looking up from her paper.*) A baronet of Great Britain you will soon be; this day's post, I trust, will inform you of that honour being conferred upon you; but the seven thousand a-year, I wish we were as sure of having that added to it.

Sea. I wish we were; but Mr. Plausible has been with me last night, and has pointed out a way to me, in which, by venturing a considerable capital on very small risk, a most prodigious gain might be made; and in which, money laid out ——

Lady S. (*interrupting him eagerly.*) Will never return any more! (*Getting up alarmed.*) Pray, pray, my dear Seabright, don't frighten me! The very idea of such a scheme will throw me into a fit. — Don't let that man enter the house any more — he is a dark-eyed, needy-looking man — don't let him come here any more.

Sea. Why, what alarms you so much? he is a very uncommon man, and a man of genius.

Lady. S. Keep him out of the house, then, for heaven's sake! there is never any good got by admitting men of genius; and you may keep them all out of your house, I'm sure, without being very inhospitable.

Sea. Your over-caution will be a clog upon my fortune.

Lady S. A clog upon your fortune, Mr. Seabright! Am not I doing every thing that a woman can do to advance it? am not I writing letters for you? making intimacies for you? paying visits for you? teazing every body that is related to me within the fiftieth degree of consanguinity for you? —and is this being a clog upon your fortune?

Sea. Well, well! we shall see what it all comes to.

Lady S. Yes, we shall see; this very post will inform you of our success; I'm sure of it: and see, here are the letters.

(*Enter* Pry *with letters, which she gives to* Sea.; *and then puts one down on the table for* Lady Sarah, *who is so busy looking at* Seabright's *that she does not perceive it.*)

Lady S. (*to* Pry, *who seems inclined to stay.*) Don't wait: I shall call when I want you.

[EXIT Pry.

Sea. (*opening a letter, and running his eye over it eagerly.*) Hang it! it is about the altering of a turnpike road. (*Throws it away impatiently, and opens another letter, which he reads in like manner.*) Stuff and nonsense, about friendship, and old acquaintance, and so on! What a parcel of fools there are in the world! Ha! what seal is this? (*Opening another letter eagerly.*) Hell, and the devil! it is a letter from your brother, and only a common-place letter of compliment, with never a word on the subject! (*Tearing the letters in a rage, and strewing them upon the floor.*) Cursed be pen, ink, and paper, and every one that puts his trust in them!

Lady S. Don't destroy the blank sides of your letters, Mr. Seabright, they will do to write notes upon.

Sea. O confound your little minute economy, Lady Sarah! it comes across me every now and then like the creeping of a spider: it makes me mad.

Lady S. (*putting aside her papers, much offended.*) I think I need scarcely give myself the trouble of writing any more to-day. (*Seeing the letter on her table.*) Ha! a letter from my brother to me! (*Opening it.*) And a later date I fancy than that which you have received. (*Reads it with her countenance brightening up.*)

Sea. (*looking eagerly at her.*) What's in it? (*She is silent.*) What's in it? for God's sake tell me!

Lady S. (*going up to him with a smiling face, and an affected formal curtesy.*) I have the honour to congratulate Sir Anthony Seabright.

Sea. Is it really so? Is it really so? Let me see, let me see. (*Snatches the letter from her, and reads it.*) O it is so, in very truth!—Give me your hand, my dear Lady Sarah! and give me a kiss too. (*Kisses her on one cheek, and she graciously turns to him the other.*) O one will do very well.—Where are all the children? let every soul in the house come about me!—No, no, no! let me be decent; let me be moderate.

Enter PLAUSIBLE.

Sea. (*going up joyfully to him.*) How do you do? how do you do, my very good friend?

Lady S. (*pulling* Sea. *by the sleeve.*) You know you are engaged; you can't speak with any body at present.

Sea. I can do all I have to do very well, and give a quarter of an hour to Mr. Plausible, notwithstanding.

Lady S. (*still pulling him.*) You have many letters to write, and many other things.—You understand me?

Plau. I shall have the pleasure of calling, then, to-morrow morning.

Lady S. He is engaged to-morrow morning.

Plau. And in the evening also?

Lady S. Yes, Sir, and every hour in the day. —He has not yet laid out his fortune to such advantage as will enable him to bestow quite so much leisure time upon his friends as Mr. Plausible.

Plau. I can never regret the leisure time I have upon my hands, since it has given me an opportunity of obliging your ladyship: I have procured the inestimable receipt for whitening linen without soap, that I mention'd to you, and I shall bring it to you to-morrow.

Lady S. Pray don't take the trouble! I am much obliged to you: but we are all so much occupied! (*To* Sea.) Are not you going to write by return of post?

Sea. (*to* Plau.) I am really much engaged at present: the King has been graciously pleased, tho' most unworthy of it, and most unlook'd-for on my part, to honour me with the dignity of a baronet of Great Britain.

Plau. I rejoice, my dear Sir, I congratulate you with all my heart; and I have the honour to congratulate your ladyship also.

Lady S. I thank you, Sir—good morning—good morning.

Sea. (*to* Plau.) Trifling as these things may be, yet as a mark of royal favour ——

Lady S. (*impatiently.*) Yes, yes; he knows all that well enough.—Good morning. (*To* Plau.) You will positively have no time to write your letters by the return of post. (*To* Sea. *pulling him away, who bows to* Plau. *and goes with her unwillingly. Turning round suddenly to* Plau. *as they are just going out.*) Whitening linen without soap?

Plau. Yes, Madam; and no expence of any kind in the business.

Lady S. When you are passing this way, at any rate, I should be glad to look at it.

Plau. I shall have the honour very soon of calling upon your ladyship.

Lady S. You are very obliging. You will excuse us; you will excuse us, Mr. Plausible; we are really obliged to be extremely rude to you.

[EXEUNT Lady S. *and* Sea.

Plau. (*alone.*) Ha, ha, ha! I shall keep my hold still, I find.

Enter PROWLER, *looking cautiously about as he enters.*

What do you want?

Pro. Unless you want to be laid up by the heels, don't go out of this house by the same door that

you enter'd it. I have waited in the passage here to tell you.

Plau. Ha! have they found me out?

Pro. Yes, by my faith, there are two as ugly looking fellows waiting for you at the front entry as ever made a poor debtor's heart quake. There is surely some back door in this house.

Enter ROBERT.

(*To* Rob.) My good friend, I want to know where we can find a back way out of this house.

Rob. And I want to know when I am to have the crown I intrusted to you.

Pro. To me, Sir?

Rob. Yes, to you, Sir; and you know it very well, you do.

Pro. O! you are my friend Robert, that I was enquiring after.

Rob. Yes, Sir; and I will have my money directly; for I know you are a cheat; I know it by your very face.

Pro. Ha, ha, ha! So you prefer having a crown to-day to receiving ten guineas to morrow?

Rob. Receiving ten fiddle-strings to-morrow! Pay me my crown directly.

Pro. Very well, with all my heart; but you must sign me a paper, in the first place, giving up all right to the ten guineas you are entitled to. (Robert *hesitates.*) Nay, nay, I'm not such an ass as you take me for: there is pen, ink, and paper. (*Pointing to the table.*) Sign me a right to the ten guineas directly.

Rob. (*scratching his head.*) Well, we'll let it stand, if you please, till another time.

Pro. I thought so: faith you're too cunning for me! But shew us the way to the back door, quickly.

Rob. And should you like to come that way to-morrow, when you bring me the money? I shall be sure to be in the way to let you in.

Pro. Let us out by the back door to-day, and let me in to-morrow by any door you please.

[EXEUNT.

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

ACT IV.

SCENE I. Seabright's *library. Enter* SEABRIGHT, *as if from a short journey, and the* Eldest Boy *running after him.*

Boy. O papa, papa! I'm glad you're come back again! And have you said over your speech to the Parliament? and did they say any fine speeches back again to you?

Sea. Go away, George: I'm fatigu'd; I can't speak to you now.

Enter ROBERT.

Rob. Won't your honour have some refreshment after your journey? My lady is gone out an airing: you had better have something.

Sea. No, nothing, Robert.—A glass of water, if you please. (*Sits down grave and dispirited, whilst* Robert *fetches the water, and the* Boy *plays about the room.*)

Rob. (*presenting the water.*) I'll warrant now that you have had a power of fine talking in this Parliament house; and I warrant your honour's speech was as well regarded as any of it.

Sea. I thank you, Robert: I am fatigued, and would be alone for a little: take that boy away in

your hand. (EXEUNT Rob. *and the* Boy, *and* Sea. *remains some time musing with a dissatisfied face; then speaking to himself.*) "The conciseness with which the Honourable Baronet who spoke last has treated this question." Ah! but I was, — I was too concise! The whole train of connecting and illustrative thoughts, which I had been at so much pains, beforehand, to fix and arrange in my head, vanish'd from me as I rose to speak; and nothing of all that I had prepared presented itself before me, but the mere heads of the subject, standing up barren and bare, like so many detach'd rocks in a desert land. (*Starting up.*) This will never do! I'm sure I have not spared myself: I have labour'd night and day at this speech: I have work'd at it like a slave in a mine; and yet, when I came to the push, it deceived me. (*Shaking his head.*) This will never do! let me rest satisfied with what I have got, and think of being a speaker no more. (*Stands despondingly for a little while, with his arms across, then suddenly becoming animated.*) No! I will not give it up! I saw an old school-fellow of mine in the lobby, as I went out, who whisper'd to the person standing next him as I pass'd, that I was his townsman. Does not this look as if my speech, even such as I was enabled to give it, had been approved of? O, I will not give it up! This is the only way to high distinctions: I must drudge and labour still. Heigh ho! (*Yawning grievously. A gentle tap is heard at the door.*) Who's there? (*Angrily.*)

Soph. (*without.*) May I come in, papa?

Sea. Yes, yes; but what do you want?

Enter SOPHIA, *timidly.*

Soph. I only come, my dear Sir, to see how you do after your journey. But you don't look well, papa; you don't look happy: has any thing displeas'd you?

Sea. No, my good girl.

Soph. (*kissing his hand.*) I thank you, papa, for calling me your good girl: I was your good girl.

Sea. And are so still, my dear Sophia; but you must sometimes excuse me; I am not very happy.

Soph. Ah, papa! I know what makes you unhappy.

Sea. (*shaking his head.*) Thou dost not! thou dost not!

Soph. Ah, but I do! and nobody told it me neither — I can just see it my own self. You are giving yourself a great deal of trouble, and courting very proud and very disagreeable people, for what you very probably won't get; and you are grieved to think that Lady Sarah does not treat us so kindly as she might do. But don't be unhappy: don't court those proud people any more: you have enough to live upon as you used to do; and Lady Sarah will be kinder to us by-and-bye. I know she will; for she loves little Tony already; and if she should not, we will never complain.

Sea. (*kissing her.*) My sweet child! thou deservest — O thou deservest more than I can ever do for thee!

Soph. (*gladly.*) Do you say so, indeed? O then do this for me!

Sea. What is it, Sophia?

Soph. Trouble yourself no more with great people, and studying of speeches for that odious Parliament; and when Lady Sarah is out of the way, let the children come and play about you again, as they used to do.

Sea. (*tenderly.*) I thank you, my good child, but you don't understand these things. (*Walks thoughtfully across the room, and then returns to her again.*) There is an office which Lord Allcrest has promised to procure for me, that would bring me a considerable and permanent addition to my income; if I once had that secured, I believe, in truth, it would be no unwise thing in me to follow your advice.

Soph. O, my dear Sir, I hope you will have it, then! (*skipping joyfully.*) I hope you will have it!

(*Enter a* Servant, *and announces Sir* Crafty Supplecoat.)

Sea. Sir Crafty here! can any thing have happen'd for me?

Soph. O if it should be the place!—But shall I go away? for I don't like to see that man.

Sea. No, my dear, stay with me; I like to have you beside me.

Soph. Then I will stay; for I am happy now, and I can look upon him boldly.

Enter Sir Crafty Supplecoat.

Sea. Sir Crafty, your servant; I'm very happy to see you.

Sir C. Your servant, Sir Anthony; I'm happy in being able to pay you my respects. — Miss Seabright I hope is well. (*Bowing to* Soph. *who returns his civility with cheerfulness.*) Indeed, Sir Anthony, I have long'd ever since I heard your speech in the House, which, for a maiden speech — Well, I will not say what it was. — I have long'd to declare to you the extreme pleasure I take in the fair career that is now open'd before you, and in being permitted to consider myself as one of your friends.

Sea. You do me great honour; I am infinitely obliged to you. My speech indeed ought — it ought to have —— (*hesitating.*)

Sir C. To have been just what it was, my dear Baronet. Your friends enjoyed it; and, let me say it freely, without envy.

Sea. I am much flatter'd: their praises are— are —— (*hesitating.*)

Sir C. Are proportion'd to their admiration, Sir Anthony; and they have great pleasure in talking of it.

Sea. (*eagerly.*) Ha! do they talk much of it?

Sir C. Yes; more than I would venture to repeat to you.

Sea. Friends, indeed, say many things that ought not to be believed.

Sir C. I assure you, yours say many things which one of the qualities you so eminently possess would not, perhaps, suffer you to believe. Eloquence — eloquence, my dear Sir — great things are to be attain'd in this country by elo-

quence. Eloquence and high connections give a man such velocity in moving, that nothing can stop his career. — But I ought to tell you, by-the-bye, that old Saunter is dead, unexpectedly; and that office, if indeed it can be consider'd as any object to you now, is ready for your acceptance.

Soph. (*aside to* Sea.) Is that the office, papa?

Sea. Yes, child: hold your tongue. (*aloud.*) I am obliged to you for this intelligence, Sir Crafty: an office for life, tho' not very considerable, is of some consequence to a man who has a family of children. (Soph. *takes her father's hand and presses it gratefully.*)

Sir C. Ha, ha, ha! Sir Anthony Seabright, with all his abilities and connections, is, like a very good father, anxious to provide for his family! I thought, my dear Sir, such talents as yours had generally been accompanied with an aspiring temper; but Lady Sarah's prudent character, I perceive, has had its effect upon you.

Sea. No, no; you are wrong.

Sir C. Nay, pardon me if I say that you also are wrong, in fixing yourself down, in the very beginning of your career, as a quiet unaspiring man, who is glad to be early provided for in a quiet, humble permanency; for this office, you know, is regarded as ——

Sea. (*interrupting him eagerly.*) What, is it regarded in that light?

Sir C. It really is. Mr. Trotman, now promoted to a peerage, and whose first speech, by-the-bye,

very much resembled your own, refused it on that very account; and Mr. Brown, and Mr. Wilson, and Sir Samuel Soppet, and many other Misters and Sirs, promoted to the same dignity, would never have got on, be assured, if they had thus fixed themselves down at the very threshold of advancement.

Sea. But I see no reason why accepting such an office as this should hinder one from advancing.

Sir C. I can give you no good reason for it, I confess; but there have been certain places, time out of mind, which have, somehow or other, been consider'd as indicative or otherwise of promotion, and which stand up in the great field of honours like finger-posts in a wide-track'd common, saying "This is the way to such a place:" they who are once possess'd of those places, move on to the others, for no earthly reason, that we can perceive, but because they have been placed in the first; and this you will readily allow is no time for innovation.

Sea. I believe there is something in what you say.

Sir C. There is so much in it, that if you can find some less aspiring friend, to whom you can with confidence give up this office, relying on his honour to assist you with the full weight of his interest on all future occasions, I am sure you will never think of accepting it.

Soph. (*laying hold of her father's arm, and speaking eagerly to* Sir Crafty.) Ah, but he will, tho'!

Sea. Sophia, you forget yourself. (*She shrinks back abash'd.*)

Sir C. (*smiling*) It is an amiable weakness in this interested age to forget yourself, and confined, I believe, to young ladies alone.

Soph. (*provoked and roused.*) I believe, at least, political baronets, tho' not very old, do but seldom fall into it. (*archly.*) And I know, papa, who this friend is that will so kindly take this office off your hands. Sir Crafty will name him to you by-and-bye: it is a man who does not forget himself.

Sea. (*displeased.*) What is the meaning of this, Sophia? I never saw you thus petulant before: I beg of you to retire: Sir Crafty and I must not be interrupted.

Soph. I will retire, my dear Sir — but oh! (*taking her father's hand and pressing it,*) but oh! — you know what I would say to you.

[EXIT, *casting a significant look to* Seabright *as she goes out.*

Sea. (*after a considerable pause.*) Sir Crafty, there is much in what you say and I believe you are perfectly disinterested in the advice you give me; but I don't know that I could justify myself to my own mind in refusing this office.

Sir. C. There are few men less interested than myself; I will say it, Sir Anthony; I will say it proudly. — Pardon me, however, I do not presume to advise you; but hearing Lord Clacker, and the Marquis of Lackland, and some others, talking of your speech, and the usual race of such abilities, and so forth, many suggestions arose in

my mind, in regard to you, my dear Sir, which I very naturally supposed just now might have presented themselves to your own.

Sea. Ha! did Lord Clacker and the Marquis of Lackland talk of my speech, and my abili — I mean the probable effects of my situation and connections?

Sir C. I assure you they spoke of both in a way very gratifying for a friend, so much interested in your promotion as I am, to hear: — but remember, I give you no advice: I am a young man, and apt, perhaps, to be too sanguine where the admiration of talents may mislead me: I am too presumptuous to mention my opinion at all.

Sea. (*taking his hand with warmth.*) O, no! I like you the better for it! to be warmly sanguine is characteristic and graceful in youth; and perhaps this propensity does not more often mislead it than the timorous caution of age. — You mention'd a friend to whom I might resign my pretensions to this office?

Sir C. I did, Sir Anthony; but I now feel an embarrassment. — I'm sure it would never have enter'd into my imagination to think of it. But will you be kind enough to take a turn with me in the garden? There are some things that must be explain'd to you at length, lest you should at all misconceive what I'm going to propose to you. [EXEUNT.

SCENE II.

The Servants' *Hall; and* Robert *discovered pulling some Clothes out of a Bag, and laughing to himself as he looks at them. Enter* Cook-maid.

Cook. Are you here, Robert?

Rob. Yes, beef-drippings; what do you want?

Cook. It is ghost-time, don't you know? and your night for it, too.

Rob. Indeed!

Cook. Ay, indeed! I groan'd last night, and Gardener the night before; so e'en take your own turn when it comes to you: you was the first contriver of the plot.

Rob. Why don't you see me preparing, hussy? I'm going to dress myself up this very night for the grand contasterfy, as a learned person would call it.

Cook. (*clapping her hands.*) O griskins and gravy, but that be delightful! Are you to appear to her to-night?

Rob. Yes, wench; for my master is in town, and is not expected back before to-morrow. (*Holding out the clothes.*) How do you like this black robe? Has it not a smack of the devil in it?

Cook. Black! I thought you were to have been all in white, like my late lady, and to have threaten'd her for being so unkind to the children.

Rob. So I intended, Deborah; but I don't know how, a qualm came across my heart, and

would not let me make a mockery and a semblance of my dear mistress; so we'll just make the devil do, my fat Deborah; he'll serve our turn well enough.

Cook. Yes; he serves many a turn, if all that is said of him be true.

Rob. How do you like that black hood with the horns to it? it is all my own contrivance.

Cook. O it will do hugeously!

Rob. And pray mix a little sooty grease for my face, cooky; and let me have some brick-dust to make a red staring ring round my eyes.

Cook. That I will in a trice! But where is your tail, master devil? Will the jack-chain be of any use to you?

Rob. No, no! let her once have a good look of my horns, and my red staring eyes, and I warrant you she'll never miss my tail.

Cook. Good success to you!

Rob. I don't doubt of success; for my lady has lived a great part of her life in an old castle in the North, and has as good a notion of a ghost or a goblin as most folks.

Cook. He, he, he! Some folks will be warm enough to-night without frying cutlets. And bless you, man! if Mrs. Pry should come in your way, give her a claw for my sake.

Rob. O never doubt that, hussy!—And here, in good time, comes Sharp to settle his part of the business; for you know we are to give his master a claw too, as well as Mrs. Pry.

Enter SHARP.

Cook. Come away, Sharp; which of us all is to visit your master's chamber to-night in the shape of the lady that he jilted, as you told us of, because her rich uncle chose to marry whilst their wedding clothes were a-making, and who took it so much to heart, poor thing! that she died soon after of the small-pox? I should not much care to do it myself.

Sharp. No, cooky, we have a better plan than that!

Cook. What is it, man?

Sharp. Tho' he laughs at Miss Seabright as a girl from the nursery, he has taken a strong desire to know whether she likes him or not; and, above all, what fortune she is to have: now I have promised to set Pry a talking to her lady about this, when she puts her to bed to-night, and to place him snugly in the adjoining chamber where he may hear every word that they say.

Rob. You have told him there is no danger of being discover'd, as that room is always kept lock'd, and that you have stolen the key of it?

Sharp. You may be sure of that.

Rob. Then you may be sure the devil won't fail to take that chamber on his way from Lady Sarah's, and pay his respects to him in passing. Come, come! let us all set about it! I'll dress in my own garret. Take some of those things in your hand.

(*Giving* Cook *some of the clothes to carry, and taking the rest himself.*) [EXEUNT.

SCENE III.

Lady SARAH's *Bed-room, almost dark, with a feeble Light thrown across the Floor, as from a bad Fire. Enter Sir* CRAFTY SUPPLECOAT *and* SHARP, *stealing softly on their Tiptoes.*

Sir C. Hist, hist! which is the door, Sharp?

Sharp. Never fear, Sir; come this way. (*Opening the door of an adjoining room.*) Go in, Sir, and fear nothing. But you must sit in the dark, and not be impatient: Pry won't fail to pump her lady, and you'll hear every word that is said. (*Putting Sir* Crafty *into the room, and pretending to lock the door upon him, then exit laughing to himself as he goes out.*)

Enter Lady SARAH *and* PRY *carrying Lights by the same Door by which* SHARP *went out, allowing him time to get out of the way without meeting him.*

Pry. (*setting down the lights.*) Well, I wish this night were well over, for I had such strange dreams last night.

Lady S. Don't trouble me with your dreams now. Have you put all my muslin things into the press, and screw'd them well down? When the creases are taken out of them, they will do perfectly well to wear another day.

Pry. To be sure, my lady; but for that old petticoat, if I do but touch it, it comes to pieces: it grieves me to see your ladyship dragging it about

like a cobweb that the flies have been thro': it would tear up into such pretty handkerchiefs!

Lady S. Will it? as large as those I commonly wear?

Pry. O, no! I don't mean such handkerchiefs as you would wear, my lady, but just ——

Lady S. Don't tease me now.—Have you heard any of those noises to-night? (*Seating herself in a chair near the front of the stage.*)

Pry. La, no! my lady: did you hear any thing?

Lady S. No, nothing at all: why do you look so frighten'd?

Pry. I'm sure the very thoughts of it has made my teeth to chatter like a spoon in an empty dish. I never heard of such things being heard in any house, except the old Castle of Allcrest, just before the Earl, your grandfather, died. Mercy on us! there was no such noises heard in our village.

Lady S. Apparitions seldom visit people of low condition, Pry.

Pry. God be praised for it! I hope this here will be of the same way of thinking. I would not be a great lady and have ghosts grunting at my bedside for the whole universal world. If you please, my lady, I should like to go up to Susan as soon as may be, pardon my boldness, for she is as frighten'd as I am; and I may chance to meet something on the stairs, if I am much later; and I know very well, my lady, you're not afraid.

Lady S. No, I'm not afraid, but I don't know how—I have a little of I don't know what, that

has come upon me. — You had better sleep on the couch by my bed to-night: I may want my drops in the night-time. — What o'clock is it?

Pry. (*looking at the watch.*) Mercy on us! it's just the very time when it begins. — What's that? (*Alarmed.*)

Lady S. Nothing: I heard nothing. (*A long pause; then a deep groan is heard from the bottom of the stage.*) Come, come! stand closer to me, Pry. (*Taking hold of* Pry.) It had a strange, hollow, unnatural sound.

Pry. Yes; just like a body speaking out of a coffin.

(*A pause, and then a second groan is heard, louder than the first.*)

Lady S. Stand closer still, I beseech you: that was horrible! (*Putting out her hand, trembling.*) Whe — whe — where is the bell-rope?

Pry. O, la! you know well enough it hangs in the other end of the room.

Lady S. Go pull it then: pull it violently. (Pry *hesitates, and seems very unwilling to go.*) Go, I say!

(Pry *goes; and as she is half-way across the room, another groan, followed by a terrible howl, is heard, and she runs back again to* Lady Sarah.)

Lady S. O go and do it! for heaven's sake! for God's sake! for mercy's sake do it! (Pry *then goes sidling across the floor, looking on every side with terror and suspicion, till she gets to the bell-rope which hangs by the head of the bed, and near the door of the room; when,*

putting out her hand to pull it, Robert *dressed like the devil, rises from behind a great chair close to the bed.* Pry *screams and runs out of the door, whilst he gives her a claw in the passing, and then advances towards the front of the stage to* Lady Sarah.

Lady S. (*shrinking back as he advances.*) O, come no nearer, whatever thou be, thou black and horrible sight! (*Devil still advances.*) O, come no nearer! in the holy name of——

Devil. Baw! (*giving a great howl and still advancing.*)

Lady S. In the blessed name of——

Devil. Baw! (*with another howl, and coming very near her.*)

Lady S. (*falling upon her knees, and clasping her hands together.*) O, as thou art awful, be merciful! O, touch me not, for I am a miserable sinner!

Devil. Yea, thou art—yea, thou art—yea, thou art, and thou shalt smart. Ill deeds thou dost, and thou shalt roast. (*Holding his great claw over her.*)

Lady S. (*contracting all her body together, and sinking down upon the floor.*) O, as thou art horrible, be merciful! What shall I do? what shall I do?

Devil. Be kind to thy husband's children, or I will tear——

Lady S. O, yes, yes!

Devil. Give them good victuals, and good education, and good clothing, or I will tear thee—

Lady S. O, yes, yes!

Devil. And give no more good things to Tony than the rest, or I will — (*starting back upon hearing a loud knocking at the street door.*) What's that?

Lady S. (*raising her head and seeing him farther off.*) No more good things to Tony than the rest! It was no devil that spoke those words, I'm sure.

(*Taking courage, and getting up.*)

Devil. (*aside, after moving farther off, and listening.*) Faith, I'll turn and give her a claw yet! I shall never have another opportunity. (*Approaching her again.*)

Lady S. Get along! I know you well enough: you are no devil, but a rascally knave. (*Setting herself in a posture of defence, when a noise is heard without, and he, taking alarm, makes a hasty exit into the adjoining chamber.*)

Enter SEABRIGHT, *and* PRY *coming fearfully after him.*

Sea. Where is this devil that Pry has been telling me of?

Lady S. (*pointing to the adjoining room.*) Follow him, my dear Sir Anthony! Follow after the rascal. [EXIT Seabright, *into the adjoining room.*

Lady S. (*calling to him.*) Be sure you don't let him escape. — Have you caught him yet?

Sea. (*within.*) Yes, I've caught him.

Lady S. Give him a good beating, then; don't spare him! he's a good brawny devil! O, don't spare him!

(*A great scuffle is heard within, and* Sea. *calls to Lady S.*) I'm dealing with him roughly enough, if that will satisfy you. (*He then calls out as if speaking*

to the devil.) And take that, and that, and that, too, you diabolical rascal! You must have midnight frolics in my house, must you?

Enter SOPHIA, *alarmed.*

Sophia. What is all this? Did I not hear my father's voice?

Lady S. (*looking suspiciously at her.*) Yes, you know nothing of the matter, innocent lamb!

Pry. I hope my master will give him a sound beating, for I know well enough it is that knave Robert: I could smell the very stink of his tobacco as he claw'd me in the passing.

Lady S. Drag him to the light, Sir Anthony: let us see him stript of his devil's skin. Ha! here he comes.

Enter SEABRIGHT, *dragging in* Sir CRAFTY SUPPLECOAT, *who is pulled along very unwillingly, and hiding his face with his arm.*

Pry. Why that an't like him, neither. Come, come! take down your arm, and let us see who you are. (*Pulling down his arm, and discovering his face.*)

All. (*exclaiming.*) Sir Crafty Supplecoat!

Soph. (*clapping her hands.*) O, I'm glad of that! I'm so glad that it is only Sir Crafty! I should have been grieved indeed if it had been poor Robert. And so it is you, Sir Crafty! ha, ha, ha, ha! (*All join her in laughing heartily, whilst* Robert, *having pulled off his devil's dress, enters accompanied by* Sharp, *and some of the other servants, and joins also in the laugh.*)

Lady. S. (*going up to* Sir Crafty *with great indignation.*) And so, Sir Crafty Supplecoat, it is to your midnight mummery I am indebted for the stern and solemn threatenings I have received! I have been visited I find by a devil of consequence. Your earnest zeal for my reformation is, indeed, very flattering.

Sea. Sir Crafty, mean and despicable as you must appear to me, I have too much respect for your situation in life to expose you any longer to this open humiliation and disgrace. Come with me to my dressing-room.

Sir C. I protest to you, Sir Anthony, and to Lady Sarah, and to all the world if they were here present, that I am in no wise concern'd in what you suspect me of.

Lady S. O, certainly you protest, Sir Crafty! but do you think that will pass upon me? Have I not known you since you were a boy but so high, with all your little, artful, wriggling, underhand ways of getting your play-fellows' toys from them, which I always despised and contemned? To be sure, you will protest any thing, and in the politest manner, too: you will send a message to Sir Anthony to morrow morning, I doubt not, to enquire how he does; and to hope that his fists are not too much fatigued with their last night's exertions. (*All the servants laugh again.*)

Sea. Come, come, this is too bad! Retire with me, Sir Crafty: you can say nothing for yourself at

this moment. I am sorry I have rib-roasted you so unmercifully; can you walk?

Sir C. (*very shortly.*) Yes, yes.

Rob. O we'll help his honour. (*Going up with* Sharp, *very provokingly, to assist him.*)

Sir C. Keep off, scoundrels! you are at the bottom of all this.

[EXEUNT Seabright *leading out Sir* Crafty *in a very rueful plight, followed by Lady* Sarah *and* Sophia, *and the servants, endeavouring to stifle their laughter.*

SCENE IV.

SEABRIGHT'S *Library. A great noise and confusion of voices is heard without.*

Seabright. (*speaking without.*) Torment me no more with these things! I will hear no more complaints, and no more explanations! Let me have peace, I beseech you, in mine own house, for one half-hour at least. (*He enters much disturbed, shutting the door violently behind him, and pacing up and down the room, sometimes muttering to himself, and sometimes speaking aloud.*) What! is there no getting on in this upward path of honour, unless we tear our way through all these briars and nettles? — Contention and misery at home! is this the price we pay for honour and distinction in the world? Would no honours take root on my untoward soil, till I had grubb'd up every sprig and shoot of comfort to make room for them? It were better to be a panniered jack-ass, and pick up my scanty provender from

the ditch, than be a garter'd peer in such a home as this.— I had once a home! (*beating his heel rapidly upon the floor.*) — Well, well, well, I have push'd my bark from the shore, and I must take wind and tide as they set.

Enter Servant.

Who comes to disturb me now?

Ser. A packet, please your honour, from Mr. Plausible.

Sea. (*eagerly.*) Ha! give it me. (EXIT Ser.) Yes, it is the plan. (*Tearing off the cover.*) I hold in my hand, perhaps, that which shall put every domestic arrangement on such an ample footing, as must extinguish these petty broils. (*A pause, and then his countenance lightening up eagerly.*) Ah, do I indeed grasp in this handful of paper the embryo of my future fortune? In faith, I could almost believe that I do! Let me go to my closet and examine it. [EXIT.

SCENE V.

A Room in the Inn. Enter SEABRIGHT *and* Landlady, *speaking as they enter.*

Sea. So, Mr. Plausible is not yet come?

Land. No, your honour, not as I know of. There is a dark-looking, lank gentleman in the cow-yard, just now, asking our Bridget how many pounds of butter may be made out of one cow's milk in a year, and such like, and setting all that she says down in his pocket-book. He, he, he! poor thing, she scarcely knows a cow from a

sheep, by reason that she is but a poor pea-picking girl from St. Giles's, that has scarcely been a month in the country; howsomever, he gets wonderfully on with his information.

Sea. Ay, that is him: he has a talent for picking up information upon every subject, and from every body: pray let him know I am here. (EXIT Land.)—(*After musing a little while.*) Ten thousand a-year! and the risk of failing but a mere trifle, not to be taken into the calculation. And his reasons are good, obvious, and convincing. But let me be moderate now: let me suppose that it only brings me in six thousand a-year; even that will entitle me to a peerage.

Enter PLAUSIBLE.

Plau. I have a request to make to you, Sir Anthony.

Sea. What is that, my dear Plausible?

Plau. When you purchase the large estate in Shropshire, will you let me have an easy lease of a good-pasture farm or two upon it? It will be a country-retirement for me; and I find on calculation that a hundred milk-cows, well fed and well managed, will bring in no contemptible revenue.

Sea. (*smiling.*) You talk of this estate with great confidence, Plausible.

Plau. Nay, I am only certain of putting the money to buy it into your pocket; you will purchase it or not, as you please.

Sea. I begin, indeed, to think favourably of

your scheme, and I appointed you to meet me here that we might not be interrupted by Lady Sarah. Women, you know, are timorous, and have no idea of increasing a fortune except by saving. We shall look over your calculations together. If salt is raised but one penny in the pound, how many thousands do I put in my pocket?

Plau. This paper will inform you exactly. And you see I have put but one penny upon the pound; for salt being a necessary of life, greatly to increase its price would be hard and unfeeling; it would make you unpopular in the country, and in the end create a resistance detrimental to its own ends. I am for moderate and sure gains.

Sea. (*taking the paper.*) I esteem you for it; my ideas coincide with yours most perfectly in this particular; and the paper also, in which you have drawn out your plan for buying up the rock-salt, I should be glad to look over that.

Plau. Here it is in my pocket.

Enter BEAUMONT *and* WILLIAM BEAUMONT.

Sea. (*angrily.*) Who comes now? O, it is you, Beaumont. We are busy; I shall come to you by-and-bye, but at present I cannot be interrupted.

Bea. I must speak with you, my friend.

Sea. Not at present: — you see I am engaged.

Bea. (*beckoning him.*) But one word in your ear, I beseech you.

Sea. Yes, by-and-bye; at present I am busy with affairs of importance.

Bea. By-and-bye will, perhaps, be too late: I must speak with you immediately. (*Beckoning him again.*)

Sea. (*impatiently.*) I cannot speak with you just now, Beaumont, and I will not.

Bea. No, no! you will. If there be any love of God, or any love of man in your heart, you will speak with me.

Sea. (*softened.*) Well then. (*Goes to* Beaumont, *who whispers in his ear, and endeavours to draw him away.*) No, I won't go with you, Beaumont, to be retarded and cross'd with your fears and suspicions: speak out boldly, and Mr. Plausible will answer for himself. (*Smiling to* Plau.) I believe we must explain our plan to this good friend of mine, for he thinks you are going to ruin me, and he is miserably afraid of projectors; ha, ha, ha!

Plau. (*smiling placidly.*) I esteem him for the interest he takes in his friend, and I don't condemn his suspicions: there are so many absurd schemes in the world, that it is prudent to be distrustful; but I will show him the firm ground on which we rest, and he will be satisfied. Do me the honour, my dear Sir, to sit down by me, and I'll explain it to you. (*To* Beau.)

Bea. Pray don't take that trouble, Mr. Plausible: I have no information for enabling me to judge of it: my mind has been little exercised in regard to the money-affairs of the world. But

though I am not a man of the world, I have one or two things to say to my friend that I wish him to attend to.

Sea. (*smiling rather contemptuously.*) Well, what are they, Beaumont? you are, indeed, not a man of the world.

Bea. Every man who risks his fortune in any scheme believes he has good grounds to rest upon: they are such as appear feasible to him.

Sea. Feasible! ours is certain.

Bea. (*shaking his head.*) A man who is anxious to get rich is apt to let his judgment be imposed upon, and forgets how many have fail'd in the same track before him.

Sea. I wish those who are apt to give advice, would take the same thing into their consideration.

Bea. Nay, my friend, there is a social influence which we all have, even the meanest of us, over one another, and there is more advice taken in the world than you are aware of. But had every adviser from the beginning of time fail'd before me, I will never believe that he who pleads to a father in behalf of his own children will speak without effect. Hear me then; let him who stands alone, run every risk to aggrandize himself, but let a father — O let the father of a family consider!

Plau. You forget, my good Sir, that the father of a family has a higher motive than any other man to aggrandize himself.

Sea. (*vehemently.*) Rather than not place my children in the situation I desire for them, I would have no children at all.

Bea. (*with warmth.*) What! will you say of creatures passing onward to the noblest destination, you had rather they had never been, unless they can gather up so much dust and trash on their way? You think yourself an ambitious parent — O, I would be for them a thousand times more ambitious than thou art.

Sea. Yes, you will shape your son's fortune out of the clouds, I make no doubt. (*Smiling contemptuously.*)

Will. B. (*who has modestly kept behind, now coming forward with spirit.*) Wherever my fortune may be shaped for me, to be the honest, well-principled son of an honest and good father, is a distinction I would not give up for all that you, and men like you, are scrambling for. (*Turning to* Bea.) Come away, father; they but mock at what you say.

Bea. Let him mock if he will, but let him hear me.

Plau. He will hear your advice with great pleasure from the pulpit, Mr. Beaumont.

Will. B. It would have been happy for the unfortunate men who have listened to yours, Mr. Plausible, if they had received it from the same place. (*Pulling* Beaumont *away.*) Come away, father, you but waste words upon them.

Bea. Nay, I would yet try if there is not some heart in him to be moved.

Sea. My dear Beaumont, you are a very good man, but you know nothing of the matter.

Will. B. (*pulling away his father.*) Leave them, leave them, Sir! Good man, as he contemptuously calls you, you are also wise enough for me: and I would not exchange fathers with the proudest young lord in the kingdom.

[EXEUNT Bea. *and* Will. B., Will. *putting his father's arm proudly under his, and walking off with spirit.*

Plau. We are obliged to that young dog, however, for taking him away.

Sea. Yes; but we'll go to another room, for he may return again. [EXEUNT.

END OF THE FOURTH ACT.

ACT V.

SCENE I. — SEABRIGHT's *Library. He is discovered sitting by a Table fast asleep, on which are scattered Letters and Papers. Enter* PRY *softly behind on her Tiptoes, and making a long Neck to see what he is about.*

Pry. (*shaking her head piteously.*) Poor man! poor man! he can't sleep in his bed o'nights, and yet he has never committed any wicked crimes, that I ever heard of.

Sea. (*angrily, after speaking inarticulately to himself in his sleep.*) You don't know my name! (*muttering again inarticulately.*) The name of Lord Seabright! (*muttering again, whilst* Pry *slips still nearer to him, listening with a face of great curiosity.*) I can't walk in my robes any longer. — See how the crowd stares at me; ha, ha, ha! (*laughing uncouthly, and* Pry *drawing still nearer him, comes against a chair on her way, the noise of which wakes him, and she retires precipitately.*) What's that? (*rubbing his eyes and looking round.*) It has been some noise in my dream. Ah! would it had been a reality! — What a busy, prosperous, animating world I have been in for these last two hours. (*looking at his watch.*) Ha! I have slept only a quarter of an

hour; and I have enjoyed as many honours in that short term as would enrich my lifetime.—Shall they indeed enrich it?—Wise men, in former ages, consider'd the visions of our sleep as faintly sketching out what is to happen, like trees and castles seen thro' the morning mist, before the brightening sun gives to them the distinct clearness of reality. (*Smiling animatedly.*) In faith I could almost believe it! There is that vigorating confidence within me which says I shall not stop short at these paltry attainments—A baronet! every body now is a baronet.—My soul disdains the thought. (*Gives his chair a kick, and overturning it with a great noise,*)

Enter PRY *alarmed.*

Pry. O la, Sir! what is the matter?

Sea. What! are you up, Pry? Why are you out of bed so late?

Pry. Making your coffee, Sir.

Sea. Did not I tell you to leave it on the lamp, and go to bed?

Pry. Yes; but I thought it would keep warmer, somehow, if I sat by it myself.

Sea. (*aside.*) Great fool! (*aloud.*) Let me have some of it, then; my head will be clearer afterwards for writing. [EXIT.

Pry. (*shaking her head, and looking after him as he goes out.*) Poor man! he would have every body to go to bed but himself. What has he got here now? (*looking at the papers on the table.*) Copies of letters to my Lord B—, and notes for

a speech on the salt duties; and calculations.—O lud, lud! What a power of trouble he does give himself! Poor man! poor man! (EXIT *in a hurry, calling out as she goes,*) I just stay'd behind, Sir, to stir the fire for you.

SCENE II.

A Room in the Inn. Enter MRS. BEAUMONT *and* Landlady, *by different sides.*

Land. La, madam! here be the great Lord, Lady Sarah Seabright's brother, who wants to see you.

Mrs. B. Wants to see me? how comes this great condescension?

Land. I reckon, Madam, that some misfortune has befallen him, and that makes some folks wonderfully well bred. I was just standing at the door, a few minutes ago, and thinking, to be sure, nothing at all of the matter, when who should I see drive past but my Lord, just turning the corner as he used to do to Sir Anthony's gate. Well, I thinks no more of the matter, when in a trice by comes that saucy-looking gentleman of his, that turns up his nose at my ale, and puts a letter into his lord's hand; upon which, after he had read it, he desired his postillions to turn round and set him down here. I'm sure as I am a living woman that something has happen'd, for he came into the house with a face as white as my apron.

Mrs. B. And wants to see me?

Land. Yes, Madam; he ask'd first of all for

Mr. Beaumont, and finding he had walk'd out, he ask'd next for you.

Mrs. B. But how did he know we were here?

Land. La, Madam! he saw your carriage in the yard; and moreover your man told him that his master and mistress had stopp'd here, on their way to Yorkshire, to see Sir Anthony's children. But here he comes, Madam. Save us all! how proud and how vexed he looks! [EXIT.

Enter Lord ALLCREST.

Lord A. Madam, I am sorry to find Mr. Beaumont is gone out: I had something of importance to communicate to him, but I believe it will be nearly the same thing if I impart it to you. I—I—(*seems embarrassed.*)—It is an unfortunate affair. As to myself, I have little to do with it; but it is right that the near relations of Sir Anthony Seabright should know, that his salt scheme has entirely fail'd, and he is involved in utter ruin: they can communicate the dreadful tidings to him more properly than I can.

Mrs. B. We are obliged to you, my Lord: it is a piece of intelligence we have every day expected to hear, but which does not certainly concern us more nearly than yourself; as I, who am Sir Anthony's connection, stand exactly in the same degree of relation to him with your Lordship.

Lord A. Yes; my sister, indeed, would gratify very foolishly a foolish inclination — but it is a recent thing, scarcely to be consider'd as a — a — a — he had many children by your sister, and lived with her many years.

Miss. B. (*smiling with great contempt.*) I don't know, indeed, at what time, from the date of a man's marriage, he ought to claim affinity with his wife's relations: perhaps it varies with occurrences, and misfortunes certainly have no tendency to shorten it.

Lord A. Madam, let me have the honour to inform you, that there is no term in which the chief of a noble and ancient family can be contaminated by the inferior alliances of those individuals who belong to his family: such things are consider'd as mere adventitious circumstances.

Mrs. B. You teach me, my Lord, to make very nice distinctions; and therefore, whilst I pay all respect to you as the representative of a noble family, you must likewise permit me to express for you, as an individual, sentiments of a very opposite nature.

Lord A. Good breeding, madam, will not permit me to return such an answer as you deserve; and therefore I will no longer intrude on your time.

Mrs. B. A better excuse, perhaps, might be found; but any one will be perfectly acceptable that procures me the pleasure of wishing your Lordship good morning.

(*As Lord* Allcrest *is about to go out, enter* Beaumont *and* Morgan, *and prevent him.*)

Bea. I am sorry, my Lord, I was not in the way when you did me the honour to enquire for me.

Lord A. (*passing him abruptly with a slight bow.*) Good morning, Sir; good morning.

Bea. (*going after him.*) You are not going to leave me thus, my Lord, angry and disturb'd as you appear to be? I cannot suffer any body, man, woman, or child, to leave me offended, if it be possible for me to part with them on more amicable terms. I flatter myself it is possible to do so on the present occasion: I am sure, — I am confident of it, if you will do me the honour to explain in what way I can be useful to you.

Lord A. I came here, Sir, upon no concerns of my own; and the conversation I have had the honour to hold with this lady, makes any explanation of the business that brought me unnecessary.

Bea. But she is angry too, I perceive, and I will have no explanation from her. I know already the unfortunate affairs of poor Seabright; and I can explain to myself the intention of your Lordship's visit: you must have the goodness to stay and hear if I explain it right. (*Taking him by the coat, and preventing him from going.*) Nay, nay, my Lord! the spirit of charity and peace-making makes a well-meaning man very bold,— you shall stay.

Lord A. (*relenting, and turning back.*) I do believe, Mr. Beaumont, that you are a very good man, and as such I respect you; but since you already know the misfortune of Sir Anthony Seabright, and will, from the dictates of your own good heart, open the matter to him in the best manner possible, my business with you is anticipated.

Mrs. B. Not, I believe, entirely, my Lord; for he knows nothing at all, as yet, of those nice distinctions between individual and family relationship, which may be necessary to prevent him from forming any unreasonable expectations from a noble brother-in-law. I presume your Lordship means to hurry back to town again, without seeing Sir Anthony.

Bea. Hold your tongue, Susan; your spirit is less mild than it ought to be, considering the warm good heart it belongs to. It is not so: his Lordship did not intend returning to town without seeing his distressed friend; you are wrong in the very outset of your account — is she not, my Lord?

Lord A. (*confused and hesitating.*) If my seeing him could be of any real service, I should never — I could not certainly have thought of returning without seeing him. — But he has never attended to my opinions: my advice has been disregarded — and then, his damn'd vanity: he refused an office the other day, which I had procured for him, that would have been a competency for life — it makes me mad to think of it.

Bea. Ah, my Lord! he is in that state in which a man's errours should be remember'd only by himself: he is in adversity.

Lord A. He has thought only of himself, I'm sure.

Bea. His connection with your sister has indeed been unlucky; and I can, in some degree, sympathize with your resentment.

Lord A. You mistake me, Sir; his connection with my sister is of no consequence to me; and I shall take care that it shall be of as little to her as possible, for I will make her independent of him: but children!—risking every thing on one single stake, with a family of children!—I am provoked beyond all measure when I think of this.

Mrs. B. (*bridling up.*) His children, my Lord—

Bea. Now pray, my dear, hold your tongue, if it be possible! We are weak, passionate creatures; why should we rub and fret one another thus? (*To Lord* A.) I praise you much, my Lord, for the interest you take in the children; but here is a good man (*pointing to* Morgan), who will—

Mor. Stop, stop, my good friend, and don't now lead me into any discussion upon this subject. I am disturb'd, and uncomfortable, and unequal to it. Take his Lordship by himself; and say to him what you please for me. (*To Mrs.* B.) Come with me, niece. [EXEUNT Mor. *and Mrs.* B.

Bea. Let me have the pleasure of attending your Lordship into the fields, where we can take a short turn or two, and speak of this subject at length: I see strangers arrived; and it is noisy here.

Lord A. Most willingly. [EXEUNT.

SCENE III.

SEABRIGHT'S *house.* *Enter* SEABRIGHT, *followed by* SOPHIA, *the* Eldest Boy, *and the* Little Girl.

Soph. Indeed, papa, you are in such good humour this morning, we can't help following you. I hope we are not troublesome; if we are, I'll take the children away.

Sea. No, my good children, you are not troublesome; you shan't go away. (*The children hang on his coat, and look up in his face much pleased.*)

Soph. They are so glad to hang upon you again, papa; and you are so good-humour'd this morning!

Sea. I finish'd my papers last night; and I have had some pleasant dreams too. — This is a cheerful, enlivening morning: every thing is in bright sunshine around us: it is like a day that wears good fortune on its face: — and, perhaps, it does.

Soph. I hope it does: and now that you seem so happy, papa, I would fain plead to you in behalf of a poor good man, who is not very happy at present.

Sea. And who is that?

Soph. Ah, you know very well; it is poor Robert. I know it was very wrong in him to frighten Lady Sarah; but he meant it for our good, and he will break his heart if he is not allow'd to be with us again.

Sea. Say no more of this at present, Sophia; and perhaps, by-and-bye, he may return to us again as your own servant.

Soph. Ha! (*surprised.*)

Sea. Yes, my sweet girl; I will be very liberal to you and to all my children: I will make a good amends to you for all that is past. (*Turning to the* Boy.) And you, my good boy, I must think of you by-and-bye. Thou art become a stout boy, George: let me look at thy face. (*Lifting up his hair from his forehead.*) Ay, it is a comely face enough: it will make a very good countenance for an admiral, or a general, or even for the woolsack, if thine inclinations should lead thee that way. Let me feel thy weight too, young rogue. (*Taking him up in his arms.*) Ah! would now that I could but know the rank and eminence of the future man I hold in these arms!

Soph. My dear Sir, you are so good to us, and so good-humoured this morning, I could wager those letters by the post have brought you pleasant news.

Sea. Letters by the post! I have received none.

Soph. Then you have not read them yet. You slept so much longer than usual this morning, that you were not up when they came, and they were put on the table in the next room. (*Pointing off the stage.*)

Sea. Let me see them, then; if they bring me any good news, they are welcome.

[EXIT *with a light active step.*

Soph. Now, children, did not I tell you yesterday that papa would love us again? and you see he has begun to do it already.

Boy. And so he does, Sophy; and I'm sorry I spoke so naughtily of him, for my heart jumps so when he loves me! (*Looking off the stage.*) But see! what is he about now, beating his forehead and walking up and down so strangely?

Soph. O dear! something is the matter.

[EXIT, *alarmed.*

Boy. (*to little girl.*) Now don't ask me for those marbles at present, Emma: I can't find them, I don't know where they are. (*Looking off the stage again.*) O how terrible he looks!

(*Re-enter* Seabright, *with an open letter in his hand, beating his head with his clenched hands, and tossing about his arm distractedly, followed by* Sophia, *who seems frightened at him, and yet wishing to soothe him. A long pause, in which he paces up and down the stage followed by* Sophia, *whilst the children run into a corner, frightened, and stare at him.*)

Soph. (*after attempting in vain several times to speak.*) My father! my dear, dear father! (*He still paces up and down without heeding her.*) O if you would but speak two words, and tell what is the matter with you, my dear, dear Sir!

Sea. I am ruined, and deceived, and undone! I am a bankrupt and a beggar! — I have made beggars of you all!

Soph. O no, father! that won't be! for God's sake don't take on so violently!

Sea. (*still pacing up and down, followed by* Soph.) I am a bankrupt and a beggar! — disgrace, and ridicule, and contempt!—Ideot, ideot, ideot! O worse than ideot!

Soph. Dear father!

(*The children run, and take hold of* Sophia, *as she follows him.*)

Sea. Come not near me — come not near me, children — I have made beggars of you all!

Soph. But we will come near you, my dear father, and love you, and bless you, too, whatever you have done. Ay, and if we are beggars, we will beg with you, and beg for you cheerfully.

Sea. Oh, oh, oh! This is more than I can bear!

(*Throws himself into a chair, quite overcome, whilst the children stand gazing on him, and* Sophia *hangs over him affectionately.*)

Enter Lady Sarah.

Lady S. What are you doing here, children? —What is all this for?—What is the matter with you, Sir Anthony?—No answer at all?—What letter is this? (*Picks up the letter which* Seabright *had dropt in his agitation, and reads it; then breaking out violently.*) O, I told you it would come to this!—I counsell'd you—I warn'd you —I beseech'd you. O Sir Anthony! Sir Anthony! what devil tempted you to such madness as this?

Soph. Oh, madam, do not upbraid him! See how he is!

Lady S. I see how it is, well enough: the devil, the devil of ambition has tempted him.—(*Going nearer him with great vehemence.*) Did not I tell you that with prudence and management, and economy, we should in the end amass a good fortune? but you must be in such a hurry to get rich!—O it would get the better of a saint's spirit to think how I have saved, and regulated, and laid down rules for my household, and that it should all come to this!—To have watched, and toiled, and fretted as I have done, and all to no purpose!—If I did not begrudge the very food that was consumed in the family!—If I did not try all manner of receipts that the wife of the meanest citizen would scarcely have thought of!—If I did not go a bargain-hunting thro' every shop in London, and purchase damaged muslins even for my own wearing!—It is very hard—it is very hard, indeed. (*Bursting into tears.*) O it is enough to turn a woman's brains!

Sea. (*starting up in a rage.*) By heavens! madam, it is enough to turn a man's brains to think, that, in addition to the ruin I have brought upon myself and my children, I have taken to my bosom —I have set over their innocent heads, a hard-hearted, narrow, avaricious woman, whose meanness makes me contemptible, whose person and character I despise!—This, madam, the spirit of ambition, which you talk of, has tempted me to do; and for this, more than all his other malice, I will curse him!

Soph. (*endeavouring to soothe him.*) Pray be not so violent with her! she does not consider what she says — she did not intend to hurt you.

Lady S. Sir Anthony Seabright, you are a base man and a deceiver: my brother shall know how you have used me: he has made you a Member of Parliament and a Baronet.

Sea. Yes, and a contemptible fool, and a miserable wretch into the bargain. But, no, no, no! I have made myself so; I deserve my punishment. —

Enter Lord ALLCREST, BEAUMONT, MORGAN, Mrs. B. *and* WILLIAM B.

And here are more of my advisers and beseechers come to visit me: advance, advance, good friends! you are come to look upon a ruined man, and you are gratified.

Bea. (*going up to him affectionately.*) No, my dear Seabright; in a very different spirit are we come: we come to sympathize with you, and to console you.

Sea. I hate sympathy, and I hate consolation! You are come, I suppose, to sympathize with me too, my Lord, and to put me in mind of the damn'd place I have given up to that knave Sir Crafty Supplecoat.

Lord A. No, Sir Anthony, I scorn to upbraid, but I pretend neither to sympathize with you nor to console you: I come to rescue my sister from a situation unworthy of a daughter of the house of Allcrest, and she shall go home with me.

Sea. Nay, by the sincerity of a miserable man, but you do console me.—Take her o' God's name! I received her not half so willingly as I resign her to you again. (*Taking* Lady Sarah's *hand to give her to her brother, which she pulls away from him angrily, and going up to* Lord Allcrest, *gives him her hand as an act of her own.*)

Lady S. If my brother will, indeed, have the goodness!

Boy. (*skipping joyfully.*) Sophy! sister Sophy! she is going away from us! is not that nice?

Soph. Hush, George!

Sea. (*to Mrs.* B. *on perceiving her smile to herself.*) Yes, madam, I make no doubt but all this is very amusing to you—you are also come, no doubt, to bestow upon me your contribution of friendly sympathy.

Mrs. B. Indeed, Sir Anthony, recollecting the happiness you have enjoyed, and the woman that shared it with you, you are entitled to no small portion of pity.

Bea. (*to Mrs.* B.) Fie upon it! fie upon it, Susan! can't you hold out your hand to him, and forgive him nobly, without tacking those little ungracious recollections to it? (*To* Sea.) Indeed, my dear Seabright, you look upon us all with the suspicious eye of an unfortunate man; but we are truly come to you in kindness and Christian simplicity; and we bring you comfort.

Sea. Yes, Beaumont, you come to me in simplicity. What comfort can you bring to me, ruined

as I am? all my fair prospects blasted! all my honours disgraced! sunk even to obscurity and contempt! you are indeed come in great simplicity.

Bea. What comfort can we bring you? does grandeur and riches include the whole of human happiness, that you should now feel yourself inconsolable and hopeless? Cannot a quiet, modest retreat, independent of the bustle of the world, still be a situation of comfort?

Sea. I know what you mean: contemptible, slothful obscurity.

Bea. You mistake me, Sir Anthony; respectable and useful privacy.

Sea. I understand you well enough: hopeless and without object — I abhor it!

Bea. What, Seabright! can a man with a family to grow up around him, be hopeless and without object? Come here, children, and speak for yourselves. (*He takes the children in his hands, and encouraging* Sophia *to come forward, they surround* Seabright.)

Soph. (*after endeavouring in vain to speak, and kissing her father's hand tenderly*). O my dear father! in the loneliest cottage in England I could be happy with you. I would keep it so neat and comfortable, and do every thing for you so willingly; and the children would be so good, if you would but love us enough to be happy with us!

Sea. (*catching her in his arms.*) Come to my heart, my admirable girl! thou truly hast found the way to it, and a stubborn unnatural heart it

has been. But I will love you all — yes, my children, I will love you enough to be happy with you. (*Pausing.*) I hope I shall — I think I shall.

Will. B. (*eagerly.*) Yes, you will! yes, you will; if there be one spark of a true man in your breast, you will love them to the last beat of your heart.

Bea. (*smiling affectionately on his son.*) Get away, stripling! your warmth interrupts us.

Sea. O no, let him speak! say all of you what you please to me now! say any thing that will break the current of my miserable thoughts; for we are at this moment indulging fancies as illusive as those that formerly misled me; even the cottage that we talk of, a peaceful home for my children, is no longer in my power.

Bea. (*going up to* Morgan.) Now, my friend, this is the time for you to step forth, and make a subdued father and his innocent children happy: bestow your wealth liberally, and the blessings that will fall upon your grey head shall well reward the toils and dangers that have earn'd it.

(*Leading him to* Seabright.)

Sea. Ha! what stranger is this? I observed him not before.

Bea. Speak for yourself now, Mr. Morgan, I will do no more for you.

Sea. Mr. Morgan, the uncle of my Caroline!

Mor. Yes, Sir Anthony, and very much disposed, if you will give him leave, to — to love — to befriend — to be to you and yours — to be the

uncle and friend of you all. (*Speaking in a broken agitated voice.*)

Sea. O no! I am unworthy to receive any thing from you—from the uncle of my much-injured wife; but these children, Mr. Morgan—I am not too proud to ask you to be a friend to them.

Bea. (*hastily to* Sea.) Poo, man! you have no real goodness in you, if you cannot perceive that he must and will be a friend to yourself also. Come, come! give him a hand of fellowship! (*Putting* Seabright's *hand into* Morgan's.) Now, God will bless you both!

Mor. If Sir Anthony will permit an old man, who has past thro' many buffetings of fortune to draw his arm-chair by him in the evening of his life, and tell over the varied hardships he has met with, he will cheer its gloom, and make it pass more pleasantly. (Sea. *presses* Morgan's *hand to his breast without speaking.*)

Mrs. B. (*to* Mor.) Well said, and gracefully said, my good uncle! Did not I tell you, you would go through your part well, if you would but trust to the dictates of your own good heart?

Bea. O there is nobody, when he does what is noble and right, that does not find a way of doing it gracefully.

Mrs. B. (*to* Sophia, *who is going up timidly to* Mor.) Yes, that is right, my dear. Come, children, (*leading the children up to him,*) gather all about him. Yes, take hold of him; don't be

afraid to touch him: it does young people good to pat the cheeks of a benevolent old man. (Mor. *embraces them affectionately.*)

Will. B. (*joining the children in caressing* Mor.) —My dear Mr. Morgan, I love you with all my soul! — And my sweet Sophy — my good Sophy, don't you love him too? — She is such a good girl, Mr. Morgan!

Mor. So she is, William; and she must have a good husband by-and-bye to reward her. I dare say we shall find somebody or other willing to have her. (*Smiling archly upon* William, *who looks abashed; and letting go* Sophy's *hand, retires behind.*)

Sea. (*to* Mor.) I have now voice enough, my generous friend, to say that I am sensible of your goodness: but there are feelings which depress me ———

Mor. Say no more about it, my good Sir! I am happy, and I would have every body to rejoice with me.

Lord A. (*to* Mor. *leading forward Lady* Sarah.) And every body does rejoice with you, my good Sir. Permit me to assure you, that tho', perhaps, somewhat injured with the ways of the world, I have not been an unfeeling spectator of what has passed; and I believe Lady Sarah also has not looked upon it with indifference. (*Turning to* Sea.) Now, Sir Anthony, I would, if possible, part friends with you; and I have a favour to request, which will, if it is granted, make me forget every unpleasant thing that has passed between us.

Sea. Mention it, my Lord; I will not willingly refuse you.

Lord A. My sister has just now told me, that she will leave you without regret, if you will let her have your youngest boy to live with her: I join my request to her's.

Boy. (*eagerly.*) What, take Tony away from us! no, but she shan't tho'!

Sea. I am much obliged to you, my Lord, and to Lady Sarah also; but I cannot find in my heart to divide my children. He shall, however, visit her frequently, if she will permit him; and if she will have the goodness to forget the hasty words of a passionate man, and still take an interest in any thing that belongs to him, he will be gratified by it.

Soph. And I will visit Lady Sarah too, if she will have the goodness to permit me.

Lady S. I thank you, my dear; it is, perhaps, more than I deserve. (*To Mrs.* B.) And may I hope, madam, that you will forget whatever unpleasant things may have passed between us?

Bea. (*interrupting his wife as she is about to speak.*) Now answer her pleasantly, my dear Susan! (*Mrs.* B. *smiles pleasantly, and gives her hand to Lady* Sarah.) Now every thing is right. O it is a pleasant thing to find that there is some good in every human being!

Enter a Servant, *and whispers to* Bea.

Is he here? let him enter then.

Sea. Who is it? I can see nobody now.

Bea. Don't be alarmed: it is a friend of yours, who has offended you, and takes a very proper season to be forgiven. It is one who durst not, in your prosperity, shew you the extent of his attachment; but he has now come, for he has already open'd his mind to me upon hearing of your misfortunes, to put into your hands, for the benefit of your children, all the little money he has saved, since he first began to lay up one mite after another, and to call it his own property.

Sea. Who can that be? I did not think there was a creature in the world that bore us so much affection.

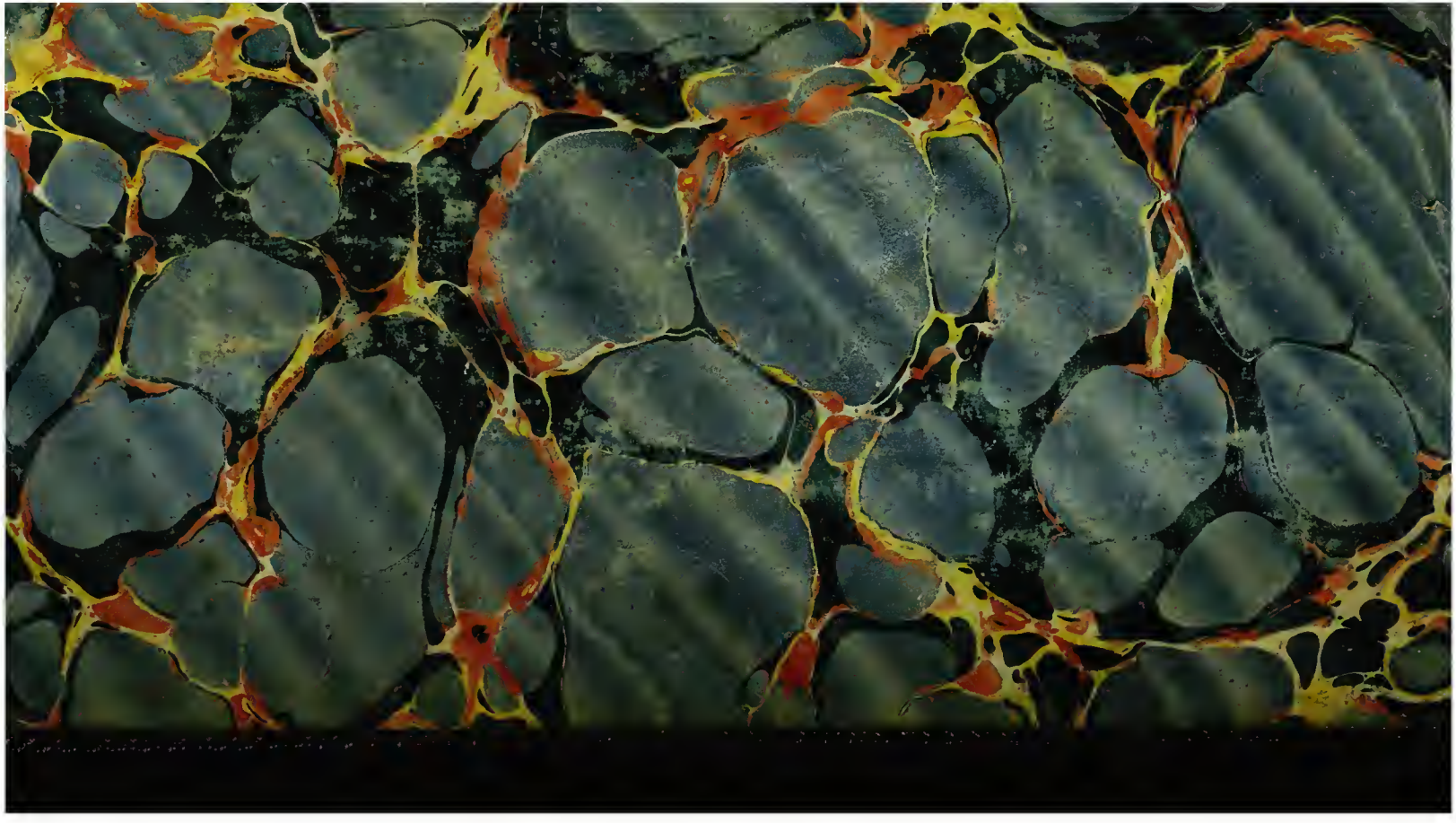
Enter ROBERT, *who starts back upon seeing so many people.*

Bea. Come in, my good Robert: (*taking his hand and leading him forward,*) thou need'st not be ashamed to shew thy face here: there is nobody here who will not receive thee graciously, not even Lady Sarah herself.

(*The children and every body gather round* Robert.)

Sea. (*coming forward with* Bea.) Ah, my dear Beaumont, what a charm there is in doing good! it can give dignity to the meanest condition. Had this unlucky scheme but succeeded, for if we could have but weather'd it a little while longer it must have succeeded, I should have been — I think I should have been munificent as a prince.

Bea. Ah, no more of that, my dear friend! no more of that! such thoughts are dangerous, and the enemy is still at hand: chide the deceiver away from you, even when he makes his appearance in the fair form of Virtue.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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